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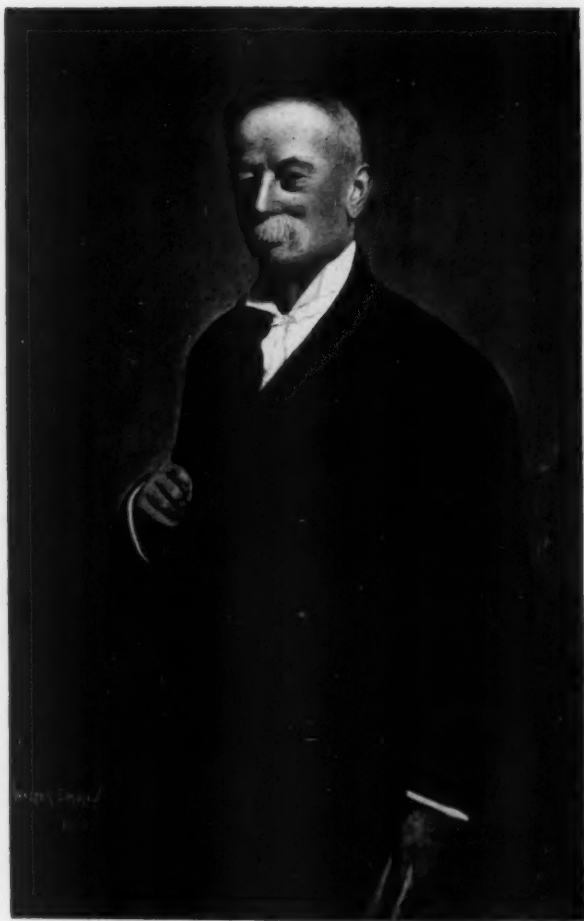
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*From the portrait by Walter Emsley.*

*C. Ireland.*

**JOHN MORTIMER.**







## Christopher Marlowe.

BY WILLIAM C. HALL.

"He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature."—*Swinburne*.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, the second child and eldest son of John Marlowe and Catherine (*née* Arthur), was born at Canterbury—probably at 57, St. George's Street—on February 6, 1564. He was thus the senior of Shakespeare by less than three months. He was christened on the 26th of the same month at the Church of St. George the Martyr. The spelling of the name he took in baptism need not concern us, but, if my eye is not deceived over a facsimile of the entry in the church register, the surname is there spelt "Marlow." This I note on account of variants which may interest more competent investigators than myself, who, tracing the various forms of the name retrospectively and prospectively, would probably be able to discover and establish a more extensive association than has hitherto been recognised. An early spelling of the family name was Marley; in the city's records the poet's father is referred to as Marlyn; and the poet himself is entered in the several documents certifying his connection with Cambridge University, as Marlyn, Marlin, Marlen and Marley. He was first educated in the King's School, to which he was admitted, on gaining a scholarship, on January 14, 1579. His entrance was late—scholars were only admitted between the ages of nine and fifteen. When he left is uncertain. He gained in his school one of the scholarships founded at Corpus Christi College (Benet's), Cambridge,

by Archbishop Parker, "for the best and ablest scholars" in certain Kentish and Norfolk schools, who, besides, should be particularly instructed in grammar, "and, if it may be, such as can make a verse." He matriculated on March 17, 1581, obtained his B.A. degree in 1584, and proceeded to the M.A. in 1587. His university career, if not marked by special distinctions, was noteworthy for its regular attainments; without gaining—this is my judgement—remarkable or exceptional erudition, he faithfully observed the requirements of his courses, and consistently gave satisfaction to the university authorities. This fact is not much in itself, but by its simple implications it may enable us to meet with a little healthy scepticism, with a mind not too ready to believe the worst of any man, the grosser charges which have been levelled at his personal character. What only is of importance for us to remark at this point is that he had written before he left Cambridge, besides sundry exercises of no great merit, the First Part of "Tamburlaine," the material for which was chiefly derived from the English translation, Fortescue's "Foreste" (1571), of Pedro Mexia's life of Timur, published at Seville in 1543. It was acted by the Lord Admiral's men in 1587, probably not before Marlowe had settled in London.

We turn to it without delay, because there is available very little material of certain biographical importance.

"Tamburlaine" achieved immediate and complete success; and that it was followed forthwith by the Second Part is attested by the evidently hastily written and relatively loosely constructed character of the latter. These "two Tragicall Discourses" were printed in 1590. If we are to assume with Mr. Ingram\* that the popularity of

\* His book, "Christopher Marlowe and his Associates," frankly but superfluously partizan, too truculently vindicatory of Marlowe's good name, contains most valuable information and not a few estimable suggestions.

"Tamburlaine" as a play was *largely* due to the impersonation of the hero by Edward Alleyn, we shall detract from the significance of its production and obscure this clear fact, that the first effort of Marlowe was in itself phenomenally successful and was fraught with happiest and gravest consequences to dramatic writing and representation,—nor only to these, but also to the structure and the quality of all subsequent English heroic verse. I do not care how gorgeously Alleyn was apparelled, how subtle and dominating and massive his representation, how psychologically versatile his acting, how majestic and captivating his general attraction and impression, it was Tamburlaine that filled the scene, and his "mighty line" that shook the firmament. This is the one point on which I will not give way, for not to stand to it would be to waste the whole argument for the reputation which Marlowe instantly acquired. To say that Alleyn may have given, as no doubt he did, a wonderful interpretation of his rôle is in this instance adequate recognition of the credit of an actor, then only one-and-twenty, whose genius, like his beneficence, is one of the most admirable things in our view of the English stage; but to say less than this, that Marlowe, single-handed, had beaten off the boards the laborious big dolls of nerveless and uncertain tragedy, is to begin the consideration of his work with the most facile means of misunderstanding it. Did Alleyn, with his brilliant elocution, moderate and relieve the bombast of the play, or roundly and most tumidly declaim it? Whatever he did, in his voice was another which no utterance could drown: Tamburlaine had spoken—that was the fact, simple now, but incalculable then. He had sounded, as we say, the right note. Marlowe had seen two things, the mind of the drama which, after a sudden development, was still enmeshed in the classical tradition, and the heart of the man who wanted to see a real play. It was not a time, this end of the sixteenth century, for niceties. On the other hand, the drama and

the playgoer did not want blood. They wanted life. Marlowe knew, everybody knew; but it is not a contradiction to say that Marlowe was the only man who *did* know. The people had survived the crudities of Miracle Plays, Mysteries and Moralities; they had escaped the sententiousness of "Gorboduc." With the introduction and multiplication of the public theatre, they had gathered somewhat from classical mythology, romantic legend, and national history; they had tasted tragedy which, if not robust, was at least ruddy, and had taken many horrors under the anæsthetic of popular clowning; they had not wanted things sanguinary nor things startling—they had had their shocks and lurid visions—but living things of breath and movement, things of the vivid day, they had not encountered. Marlowe, with an insight into the popular character and taste and a perception of the requirements of the stage which we cannot appraise too highly, realised that the main characters of drama, which was of itself to capture attention and hold and maintain interest, must be very much alive; more,—and this is the important point—he realised how much alive they must be. The confidence of the man was admirable. Those opening lines of the Prologue of "Tamburlaine" invited the man in the pit for the first time to set his eyes directly upon the stage and look straight into tragedy: three lines, but as they are regarded in relation to the prevailing theatric customs, they are as audacious as anything done in the history of our literature:—

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits,  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war.

Whether Marlowe was actor as well as playwright cannot conclusively be determined. Phillips, whose statement was followed by Wood and Tanner, said "he rose from an actor to be a maker of plays." This practically

implies that he was acting in London before taking his M.A. degree. Against it we have to set the university regulation, that all scholars who had taken their B.A. degree should thereafter continue to reside as punctually as before during the three years required for their M.A. degree. It may have been subject to some relaxation, but, I think, not sufficient to admit of such periods of absence as would be necessary for following in London the vocation of professional actor; nor is it probable that the university authorities would favour in the case of one qualifying for the M.A. the adoption, actual or intended, of this calling. Further, it would be exceedingly difficult to maintain that Marlowe was a public actor in the very brief interval which may have elapsed between his arrival in London and the production of "Tamburlaine." Moreover, this last supposition is vitiated by the possibility—as we have said, it is not a probability—that "Tamburlaine" was acted before Marlowe left Cambridge. We judge that the contention that he was first an actor and afterwards a dramatist must go. The verse of the well-known pseudo-antique ballad, typical of the more flagrant Puritan antipathy against the stage,—

He had alsoe a player beene  
Upon the Curtaine-stage,  
But brake his leg in one lewd scene  
When in his early age—

no sane critic would wholly take as an unbiassed and unimpeachable piece of biography. The strongest argument we could bring to the contention that Marlowe was at any time an actor would be the general one, that the writing and revision of plays was notoriously not a lucrative business, and authors were driven to augment their incomes by various supplementary means. But against the contention, upon whatever ground we may base it, is the fact that the name of probably every grown actor of the period has been preserved and printed; and, as Mr.

Ingram says, "had he ever trod the stage it may be assumed as a certainty that those who sneered at him living, and slandered him dead, would have gleefully referred to the fact." This is negative evidence of weight. I am inclined to the opinion, a hazard after much reflection of the possible circumstances of his position in London, that if one must accept that he was not an actor, one may suppose that he gave remunerative instruction to the actors engaged in his pieces. In spite of what would seem to have been an influential connection established by the success of "Tamburlaine," we find no trace of patronage; and it is questionable whether any additional royalty—certainly none such as Henslowe ever gave—was substantial.

Marlowe's next production, in 1588, was "Faustus." The earliest known reference to its public appearance is in Henslowe's "Diary," under the date September 30, 1594, when a revival of it took place. It was entered in the Stationers' Books on January 7, 1600-1, but the earliest edition yet discovered is the quarto of 1604. It is well known that additions were made to the play after Marlowe's death, in 1597 and in 1602, and it is probable that this edition does not faithfully represent his manuscript. His want of humour, which may be assumed—although let it be said in passing that he was by no means deficient in the sense of irony—has been largely attested on the cumulation of judgements based upon the would-be comic interludes of this play, in which it is extremely questionable that there is any of his workmanship. What is to be said of the edition of 1616 I am content to leave with the reader who has the little patience requisite for a comparison of the two quartos: he shall say whether the pale buffoonery of the play's popular reliefs could possibly be the work of one who had set his face severely against the conceits of clownage. This comparison will encourage another opinion, that Marlowe has been credited with a larger number of wanton attacks on the Roman Catholic



religion than can be enumerated by anybody who prefers truth and probability to malicious assumption and reckless falsehood. Remarks of this nature I am compelled to make incidentally as I proceed, not that I may use the whitewash I like to carry about with me, but to persuade you that Marlowe's character has been blackened, by saints and by sinners, and by members of that intermediate species which has not sufficient masculinity to be pure either in virtue or in sin.

"Faustus" on the stage was as completely successful as "Tamburlaine"—an interesting fact when the very different action of the two pieces is considered. But these two plays as wholes have a general resemblance; and if "Tamburlaine" may be regarded, according to its description, as a "discourse"; then "Faustus" may be designated a monologue, almost a soliloquy—as essentially it is. On Marlowe's immediate derivation of its legend I cannot satisfy myself. The legend itself originated in the sixth century, and, as Mr. Havelock Ellis says, floated down the Middle Ages in many forms. Mr. Ellis points out that Marlowe adhered to the translation of the "Volksbuch," published in Frankfort in 1587, which soon after appeared in England as "The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. John Faustus"—"he adhered to it in the incidents of the drama and their sequence." I do not attach much importance to the statement, in view of the prevalence of the legend, the main features of which were too simple to admit much variation, and in consideration of Goethe's admirable encomium of the play, "How greatly it is all planned!" Mr. Ellis proceeds: "The wearisome comic passages which Marlowe may or may not have written, are copied with special fidelity." Exactly. Does it not let light in? Does it not confirm what we have previously stated? We learn, I think, how comic passages falsely attributed to Marlowe came to be inserted: the fact that they are specially faithful transcriptions is, in view of all

we know about Marlowe, disproof of his authorship and the complete vindication of a previous case we have urged. I do not contend that it also disposes of the suggestion that Marlowe used the translation of the "Volksbuch." My difficulty here is in coming to any conclusion on the point whether between the issue of this translation, "soon after" the original in 1587, and the production of "Faustus" in the following year he had read the book. If he did write the comic passages, the weight of our argument is against the idea that he had read the book before the first production of the play. On the other hand, if he did not write them, where does his alleged reading of the book come in? We are impaled on a dilemma. My reasoning implies one circumstance more—unless you disengage it by the pure contention that it supposes 1588 as the date of the play,—viz., that "Faustus" *was* first produced in 1588.

Marlowe's next play was the "Jew of Malta." If the Prologue, which contains the expression, "now the Guise is dead," was written first, the whole piece was composed after December 23, 1588. Prologues, as a rule, are really epilogues; and I cannot think that this, put upon the lips of Machiavelli, was an exception. But it is equally impossible to determine when Marlowe began its composition as it is to decide the year in which it was first acted. The first notice of it in Henslowe's "Diary" is under the date February 26, 1591. For Mr. Ingram's statement that it was produced on the stage "about the early part of 1589," I have not detected the evidence, and very strong evidence should be furnished in assigning it to such an early period. It was printed in 1633, and, as it stands, contains many corruptions. The particular source of it, if it had such, we cannot discover. No copy of "The Jew," favourably mentioned by Stephen Gosson amid the denunciations of his "Schoole of Abuse," has come down to us. In this case again, I think, Marlowe accepted tradition. Hallam said, "The first two acts of the "Jew

of Malta" are more vigorously conceived, both as to character and circumstance, than any other Elizabethan play except those of Shakespeare." It is a just appreciation. Unfortunately, the subsequent acts are painful declensions. "It is now a commonplace of criticism," declares Swinburne, "to observe and regret the decline of power and interest after the opening acts of the *"Jew of Malta."* This decline is undeniable, though even the latter part of the play is not wanting in rough energy and a coarse kind of interest. My own impression is that a considerable portion of Act IV. is pure interpolation. The character of Barabas, as primarily conceived and represented, is a piece of vigorous delineation; it is a pity that it should have been overlimned by what after all is only a repulsive caricature. Whether Shakespeare, in creating Shylock, was indebted to it is not a question that calls for discussion. He took a few words from the lips of Barabas,—that is all.

"Edward the Second," written probably in 1590, and acted in 1591, is, by universal consent, dramatically the best of Marlowe's plays and the first "historical" play in our language deserving the name. It is the one play of Marlowe's of which Charles Lamb did not stint his praise. He could say not less than this: "The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward furnished hints which Shakespeare scarcely improved in his *Richard the Second*: and the death scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern with which I am acquainted." Does it, as some have maintained, "testify to the all-powerful influence which Shakespeare had now acquired over him," "witness to the counsel and aid of Shakespeare," and encourage the "belief that some of Shakespeare's own work is present in it?" The supposition has its temptations, and one may be somewhat induced to it by Mr. Swinburne's judgment that "Marlowe has here come nearer by many degrees to Shakespeare than any of his other predecessors have ever come near to

Marlowe." But opinion in this connection is clearly a matter of choice. Now, why should we be everlastingly assuming that Shakespeare perfected his art with his first dramatic ventures. Have we not slightly overlaid the idol with gold? Have we not set up a standard to which the god himself will not conform? We tend to read into each of the plays of Shakespeare the quintessence of all. We have found a radium; and we too generously expect to find it everywhere. I claim that the consideration of Shakespeare's early dramas independently of his later work does not warrant the assumption that whatever in other writers is exceptionally brilliant may be attributable to him. On the contrary, in judgment of our immediate case, I contend that the influence was that of Marlowe upon Shakespeare, that Marlowe's success convinced Shakespeare of the possibilities of historical plays, suggested a method, and supplied an instruction, and that we have proof of all this in a comparison of "Edward II." with "Richard II."

I turn to the next play, "The Massacre at Paris," accepting the judgment from the introduction of Dyce's edition that "it would be rash to decide on the merits of a play which we possess only with a text both cruelly mutilated and abounding in corruptions," and the strong suspicion that "even in its pristine state, it was the very worst of Marlowe's dramas." It is possible to regard it, by more than the fact of its consisting of only three acts, as an incompleting play, terminated in a manner for the purpose of the stage, but abandoned by its writer with disgust.

When Marlowe wrote "Dido" is disputable. According to different considerations it may be placed early or late in his career. Mr. J. A. Symonds, whose treatment of Marlowe is a most lucid and memorable interpretation, is inclined to refer it to the beginning of his career as a playwright, on the very true ground that "it shows a still imperfect command of blank verse and a hesitation

between that measure and rhyme, which does not belong to the poet's maturity." Particularly by reason of the first fact, its imperfect blank verse—the lines are monotonous for want of pauses—I am disposed to believe in its early composition; but, on the other hand, in consideration both of the nature of its subject and of its rhymes one should reflect that it may have been influenced by "Hero and Leander." It should be noted too that it contains several verbal reminiscences of the earlier plays. But much of it was the work of Thomas Nash.

These plays did not exhaust Marlowe's dramatic genius. Both "Lust's Dominion" and "Titus Andronicus" have been attributed to him. But probably both are imitations of his style by contemporaries, whose identity we are not yet likely to discover—for the latter the argumentative may draw in Kyd, if they will. That not a little credited to Shakespeare was written by Marlowe is indisputable, although it is by no means easy satisfactorily to decide what and how much. Unquestionably he is the principal author of the Second and Third Parts of "Henry VI.," and in "King John" and "The Taming of the Shrew" his voice is audible, if his hand is not plainly visible. If we could accept the tempting hypothesis that Marlowe and Shakespeare actively collaborated, something more might be said towards the elucidation of problems that vex the student of this early period of our drama. But we turn aside from this and its associated tasks.

Marlowe's translations of Ovid's "Amores" and his supposed version, a line-for-line translation, of the "First Book of Lucan" do not call for more comment than this, that they are quite unworthy both of his scholarship and of his muse. What remains is of the noblest. "Come, live with me and be my love," of which old Izaak Walton best knew the rarity, is one of the first gems of Euterpe's coronal. "Trust me, Master, it is a choice song." I think it compelled Raleigh to reply, and worthily. It is a haunting, inspiring song, and he who catches its spirit—

as who can fail?—must sing a little like it. If Marlowe had written nothing besides “*Hero and Leander*,” he had yet written his name imperishably among the greatest of our poets. Its marvellously sustained and delicate melody, the consummateness of its narrative, and, apart from its sexuality, its beautiful passion make it, of its kind in our language, the richest monument of poetic genius. The question is not whether it will bear comparison with “*Venus and Adonis*” and “*Lucrece*,” but whether these will bear comparison with it. They have the greater psychology, but in my mind there is absolutely no doubt as to which has the nobler poetry.

I shall not review what has been extensively surmised of Marlowe's life in London, particularly during his last years. If we accept all the statements that have been made, he was the intimate associate of some of the finest spirits of his time, and of some of the basest, the most morally perverted and humanely vile. Tradition, forgetting the appellation, “*kind Kit Marlowe*,” and the generous praise of the best of his contemporaries, has come to us with an entirely repulsive tale. We have all heard it; we have all in part at least believed it; we have all sickened of it. But we have not asked the question, Is it true? Now, I confess that an emphatic negative cannot readily be given; but I contend, in modification of faith in what tradition hands to us, that, as the credentials of those who have elaborated the sins of Marlowe are examined, it is equally difficult to assert the affirmative. Kyd, Greene, Baine, Baker and Beard are not characters whose purity of mind, integrity of intention and purpose, and moral grace justify the unhesitating acceptance of their word. By these creatures the name of Marlowe has been wantonly fouled and blackened, as by squalid hands that, through irritation of their filth, must touch and rub some cleaner flesh. I maintain the comparison. These libels and lies, these unclean, unholy, damnable exaggerations and inventions of minds utterly lost in Erebus, are

incomparably more significant of the godlessness of his traducers than of the atheism and immoralities of "kind Kit Marlowe." I shall not make him a saint, nor am I concerned for his beatification; but I am concerned for a little of his honour. "He that filches from me my good name . . . . make me poor indeed." The charge of atheism, to-day little more than a dubious intellectual compliment, was, at the end of the sixteenth century, particularly then, the accusation of moral and social anarchism. To deny the existence of God was the equivalent socially of the commission of heinous offences; it was indicative of badness and corruption unspeakable—but the practical virtues were not wholly with believers. In the temper of the time we can see the reason for guarding with Puritanical zeal the orthodoxy and purity of religious opinion. Now, this I want to say, that if the views and statements attributed to Marlowe in Baine's "Note" were really his, publicly expressed, no condemnation of him can be too severe, no execration too emphatic. They witness to sins greater than lapses of the willing flesh; they evidence the deliberate wickedness of a perfectly corrupt and immeasurably corrupting soul. I cannot believe that Marlowe's soul moved so riotously. On the very face of them some of the statements are self-condemned: it is quite beyond every shade of probability that any man could be so foolish as definitely and explicitly to make them. Further, the Baker documents in the Harleian collection, of which the "Note" is the most notorious, are professedly only copies—untrustworthy copies they can be proved—and their authenticity is, to say the least, not simply debatable, but to be hotly contested.

I ask now, Are you going to take Marlowe's character from Robert Greene, or anybody's? Exhausted by evil courses, Greene died in 1592, leaving to the appropriate editorship of Henry Chettle his famous "Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance." It contains

pitiful abuse of several besides Marlowe, and, delivered from a death-bed, is a supreme specimen of the excesses of malignity. Marlowe's protests against the outrage perpetrated on his fame were only met with the scurrility of the miscellaneous hack. What of the author? That Greene was as lewd a being as the light has seen would be quite gratuitous to contend. I believe that even he has been wronged; but the entire blame rests with himself. I think the opinion of Mr. J. A. Symonds is nearer the truth than most have come:—"In spite of the infamous life with which Grene charges himself, he does not seem to have been a thoroughgoing and contented scoundrel, but rather a weak, vain, vicious man, who abandoned himself to evil courses." Yet he was strangely bad; so was he caught in fits of remorse and paroxysms of repentance. Now I leave it with you, whether a man so aberrant, who could die with scorn and malice upon his parched tongue, leaves to us a single word that may not mock the name of truth.

Others I must pass over. I have not argued or declaimed against the opinion that "the last years of Marlowe's life grew careless and irregular"—a strong case in support of it could be made out—but my aim has been to show that, whatever declension and deterioration of character may have taken place, the commonly accepted evidence that would reveal it is not unimpeachable, and is obviously unreliable.

Marlowe died at Deptford, whither he had gone probably to visit Drake's old ship, "The Golden Hind," at the end of May, 1593. The circumstances are conjectural only. We cannot go beyond the entry in the burial register of St. Nicholas Church, Deptford:—"Christopher Marlowe, slain by Francis Archer, sepultus 1 of June."

Let us turn now to a brief consideration of what outstands our biographical sketch. Marlowe has been justly styled the father of English dramatic poetry. Anything like an attempt to analyse his plays would be,



after their interpretation by Mr. J. A. Symonds, a work of supererogation. That he was a greater poet than dramatist may be taken for granted; but the fact, which in its statement might be regarded as detracting from the merit of his dramatic construction, is only to be used as high recognition of his poetic genius. It is as the inventor of a new medium of dramatic speech that he primarily claims attention. As Mr. Symonds says, "He adopted the romantic drama in lieu of the classic, the popular instead of the literary type. But he saw that the right formal vehicle, blank verse, had been suggested by the school which he had rejected." The adoption of blank verse meant more than the use of a new form for tragedy; it meant the introduction of new matter. Mr. Swinburne adds to the description of Marlowe as the father of English tragedy that he was "the creator of English blank verse." What is blank verse? The common answer will be that it is unrhymed heroic. But that is not a definition. What would be a definition? I leave the question in the lap of the gods; but I say this, that whilst rhymed verse may possess little besides rhyme, blank verse has everything except rhyme. In the light of this, Surrey's work is not blank verse, nor Sackville and Norton's, nor Hughes', nor Marlowe's in "Dido"; but Marlowe's work in "Tamburlaine" is the first blank verse in our language. The chief feature of it is the pause, the alternations of which determine its movement; and that Marlowe had recognised this, that he had not only begun to write blank verse, but had grasped its principle,—that his work was technical as well as inspirational,—the reader will satisfy himself on scanning the lines of the Prologue of "Tamburlaine." Ben Johnson most happily spoke of Marlowe's "mighty line"—the reference was chiefly to "Tamburlaine"; it will not entirely hold in respect of "Edward II."—but we must point out that the line is not mighty in itself; it is mighty by cumulation: and it is in recognition of this fact that we see the

significance and potency of Marlowe's blank verse. The bombast of Tamburlaine, that splendid megaphone to make the groundlings hear, was almost a metrical necessity in the introduction of sustained passages of declamation and colloquy; at any rate, it was the preliminary of dramatic verse with body and movement. Before I turn from what in its extension would have been to me the most congenial occupation of all, the analysis of the "mighty line," let me say that Marlowe wholly forged the weapon which Shakespeare perfectly used. He gave a cunning instrument to a more supple and certain mind; and as that mind moved with a deeper power, with a firmer grip of the tool, with a more flexible inclination, and with a more delicate touch, there was wrought the miracle of speech, the joy of consummate utterance.

The general theme of Marlowe's plays is that of the glory of power.

Tamburlaine seeks infinite dominion. Mark the man :

Of stature tall, and straightly fashioned,  
 Like his desire lift upward and divine;  
 So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,  
 Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear  
 Old Atlas' burthen;—'twixt his manly pitch,  
 A pearl, more worth than all the world, is placed,  
 Wherein by curious sovereignty of art  
 Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight,  
 Whose fiery circles bear encompassèd  
 A heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres  
 That guides his steps and actions to the throne,  
 Where honour sits invested royally:  
 Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion,  
 Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms;  
 His lofty brows in folds do figure death,  
 And in their smoothness amity and life;  
 About them hangs a knot of amber hair,  
 Wrappèd in curls, as fierce Achilles was,  
 On which the breath of heaven delights to play,—  
 Making it dance with wanton majesty.—

His arms and fingers, long and sinewy,  
 Betokening valour and excess of strength—  
 In every part proportioned like the man  
 Should make the world subdued to Tamburlaine.

And hear the man:—

Nature that framed us of four elements,  
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:  
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
 The wondrous architecture of the world,  
 And measure every wandering planet's course,  
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
 And always moving as the restless spheres,  
 Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,  
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,  
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,  
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

This last line has been regarded as bathos. It is nothing of the kind. So to regard it is to miss in it the key to the character of Tamburlaine. Compare with an earlier passage:—

- Meander:* Your majesty shall shortly have your wish,  
 And ride in triumph through Persepolis.
- Tamburlaine:* "And ride in triumph through Persepolis!"  
 Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?  
 Usumcasane and Theridamas,  
 Is it not passing brave to be a king,  
 "And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"
- Techelles:* O, my lord, 'tis sweet and full of pomp.
- Usumcasane:* To be a king is half to be a god.
- Theridamas:* A god is not so glorious as a king.  
 I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven,  
 Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth.  
 To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,  
 Whose virtues carry with it life and death;  
 To ask and have, command and be obeyed;  
 When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,  
 Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes!

*Tamburlaine*: What say, Theridamas, wilt thou be a king?

*Theridamas*: Nay, though I praise it, I can live without it.

*Tamburlaine*: What say my other friends? Will you be kings?

*Techelles*: I, if I could, with all my heart, my lord.

*Tamburlaine*: Why, that's well said, Techelles; so would I.

In "*Tamburlaine*," let us note, as we proceed, we have that passage of which Mr. Swinburne says that it is "one of the noblest passages, perhaps indeed the noblest in the literature of the world, ever written by one of the greatest masters of poetry in loving praise of the glorious delights and sublime submission to the everlasting limits of his art":—

If all the pens that ever poets held  
 Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
 And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
 Their minds, and muses on admired themes;  
 If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
 From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
 Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
 The highest reaches of a human wit;  
 If these had made one poem's period,  
 And all combined in beauty's worthiness,  
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
 One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,  
 Which into words no virtue can digest.

Faustus seeks infinite knowledge, knowledge that is power, and seeks it in the study of magic:—

O what a world of profit and delight,  
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence  
 Is promised to the studious artizan!  
 All things that move between the quiet poles  
 Shall be at my command: emperors and kings  
 Are but obeyèd in their several provinces,  
 Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;  
 But his dominion that exceeds in this  
 Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man,  
 A sound magician is a mighty god:  
 Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity.

Barabas seeks infinite riches, "infinite riches in a little room," for riches are power:—

Thus trowls are fortune in by land and sea,  
 And thus are we on every side enriched:  
 These are the blessings promised to the Jews,  
 And herein was old Abram's happiness:  
 What more may Heaven do for earthly man  
 Than thus to pour out plenty in their laps,  
 Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,  
 Making the seas their servants, and the winds  
 To drive their substance with successful blasts?  
 Who hateth me but for my happiness?  
 Or who is honoured now but for his wealth?  
 Rather had I a Jew be hated thus,  
 Than pitied in a Christian poverty. . . .

Marlowe's chief characters dominate the plays: he restricts anything like adequate delineation to them—but this limitation may legitimately be judged an incapacity. His few women are not human "successes"; but there is in "Faustus" one passage for which I would sacrifice half the play, the passage that calls Helen into life. Faustus has seen her figure pass over the stage:—

That I might have. . . .  
 That heavenly Helen.

She re-enters:—

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
 And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
 Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss [*Kisses her*]  
 Her lips suck forth my soul; see where it flies!—  
 Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
 Here will I dwell, for Heaven is in these lips,  
 And all is dross that is not Helena.  
 I will be Paris, and for love of thee,  
 Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sacked:  
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
 And wear thy colours on my plumed crest:  
 Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,  
 And then return to Helen for a kiss.  
 Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air

Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;  
 Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter  
 When he appeared to hapless Semele:  
 More lovely than the monarch of the sky  
 In wanton Arethusa's azure arms:  
 And none but thou shalt be my paramour.

Not a word from Helen; but how perfect a presence!

This should be sufficient to convince anyone of Marlowe's dramatic power. If not, let him regard the high pitch at which the First Part of "Tamburlaine" is completely sustained; or let him read aloud the opening chapters of the "Jew of Malta" and the final scenes of "Faustus" and "Edward II." Often Marlowe's scenes lack unification: they stand as a mere programme of events, with the little immediate relationship of the items of a programme. He was—if I may use the term without contempt of any other—no scene-shifter; but the scenes in themselves are coherent, vivid, and forceful. It is not in construction that he is dramatically great; but he is great for his conception, for the sustained vigour of his "discourse," for his massive language, and for the certain movement of his verse.

I believe that in the recrudescence of a serious care for the national drama there will be a new regard for Christopher Marlowe. May it be ours to see upon a worthy stage the creations of his art and life. But, if it be not for us, still there is the printed book—it has pages scored with sweetest melody; it has pages of majestic eloquence, of speech that rings with "high-astounding terms," and gentle tones of lovers' hap and sadness. Forget the evil that may have been—why so long should it live after men?—the world itself is not so enduring and so fair—but forget not one whom comrades called "kind" and whose *good* lives after him.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;  
 Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,  
 And that unrest which men miscall delight  
 Can touch him not and torture not again.

## Selections from a Book of Table Talk.

BY GEORGE MILNER.

### *Composition.*

In the matter of Composition I think we scarcely make due allowance for what may be called dexterity. I mean the sort of dexterity which in things manual comes by constant repetition of the act. A man may think clearly enough, and with originality, and still write very badly indeed, because he has not yet caught the knack of expression—"the accomplishment of verse"—or prose. In looking over much manuscript I always used to find the worst composition on the first page; and it is curious to note how clumsiness of style and ungrammatical intricacy of expression are comparatively smoothed away as the leaves run on. Many persons who write an essay or an article, say, once a year, with great difficulty and awkwardness, would find composition become easy enough if they made it even an occasional rather than an exceptional pursuit.

### *Shirts.*

We have all heard the story of Coleridge's father and the shirts. I have always suspected the thing to be somewhat apocryphal—a myth evolved, perhaps, on some slender hint, out of the internal consciousness of that fine dream-webster, De Quincey. However that may be, a man in these parts—an eccentric vendor of small beer—lately did the same thing in sober certainty; only it was not in absence of mind, but by presence of intention.

Having to go to London, his wife, who is a notable shrew, packed him off with many charges and a good store of coarse but clean linen. When he returned there was not a shirt in his box.

"Wheer are thi shirts, mon?" said Mary, in a great tantarem.

"On my back," said John. "I couldna be bothert wi' packin' an' unpackin' i' strange places, so I just geet 'em on, t' one o' top t' other, and theer they are now, wench; an' I carena how soon I get 'em off again, for it's a varra warm fashion."

### *Education.*

Our first years are those of gross accretion; the later period is that of discriminating assimilation. Forward from the age of five-and-twenty a man may well be occupied with two things: the correction of errors, and the filling up of accidental blanks in his earlier education. The necessity for the first is absolute in every case; the extent and comparative importance of the second will depend on whether the education given has been what is called "liberal" or not. Large pruning there must be; and of planting more or less as the circumstances may demand.

The latest thing which the process of mature self-education usually achieves is the getting rid of that congeries of prejudices—dry bundle of faggots—which has been made to do duty for living principles. Sad it is to see, as one so often does, the intellectual forces spent and this last slough still uncast.

One cannot be said to have passed one's mental adolescence until each line of thought and course of action, however diverse, is clearly traceable downward to some simple root-principle. And the fewer of these primary sources there are and the more harmonious will be the resulting character.

The quickest mode of repairing the damage done by



defective training in youth is through the converse of thoroughly educated persons, than which, when it is uninjured by conceit, the world has nothing better to offer to us. If this be inaccessible, the next best thing is to take for mentor some journal, comprehensive in its scope and sympathies; abhorrent of slipshod; above the region of London hack-work, and whose writers are known to be, each in his department, of the best of their kind. And, if possible, let your journal have a conscience; for, however able a paper may be, if it have not that controlling and harmonising influence, the effect on the moral sense cannot but be disastrous; and even the intellect will suffer by becoming incoherent and slack of purpose.

#### *Earthquake.*

Of all the unknown physical forces, that of earthquake is the most terrible: of unknown mental forces, that of madness. In each there is the same obscurity and mysteriousness of origin; often the same suddenness of development. The fairest and stillest landscape on earth may, by the one, be in a moment rent and torn into ruin; the noblest face of man or woman, by the other, stamped in an instant with irremediable lunacy. And when we consider the structure of the world, and the nature of mental power, one only wonders that earthquake is not as common as sunset, and madness a thousandfold more frequent than it is.

#### *Epitaphs.*

That there is nothing new under the sun seems as applicable to ideas and modes of expression as to other things. Most people have heard the epitaph on a clumsy architect, attributed, I think, to Dean Swift:—

Lie heavy on him earth, for he  
Laid many a heavy load on thee.

Would not the germ of this conceit be found quite

naturally in the following anonymous lines from Greek anthology?—

Kind earth, accord within thy peaceful breast  
Amyntichus, thy benefactor, rest :

Light lie upon him, and his grave who made  
Thee verdant, with thy verdure be repaid.

*The Repetitions of Genius.*

Even the strongest genius repeats itself; returning again and again upon its favourite trains of thought and modes of expression, just as feebler minds fall back insensibly upon those ideas of other men which have been stored in the memory. You will notice this recurrence most frequently in works of a highly finished kind, probably because the mind has been casting about within itself to lay hold upon the best it was able to furnish. In the poem of Lucretius—one of the most carefully polished in our language—Mr. Tennyson has more than once drawn upon his earlier writings. Everyone admires the splendid passage which describes the haunt of the gods:—

The lucid interspace of world and world,  
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,  
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow  
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans  
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar  
Their sacred everlasting calm!

Compare this—not to take too obvious an instance—with the old lines in “Morte d’Arthur,” which we all knew in our boyhood, where the poet, describing the island valley of Avilion, where Arthur is to heal him of his grievous wound, says:—

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly.

In the later poem, the writer, having again to describe a place of supernatural calm, the rest of gods or demi-gods,

is evidently compelled to recur to his original root-conception.

*Science and Style.*

Science in these days is made into a gospel, and has its prophets and preachers, who, we sometimes imagine, have deliberately said to themselves, "Our school shall no longer be over-borne. We are the children of light, and wisdom shall be seen in our generation. We will take of the tactics of our competitors. Science shall now be taught with the grace of literature and with the impulse of religion."

Well, you cannot always get the best and leave the worse; and latterly our savants have shown something of that bigotry which used to be considered the exclusive possession of the professors of theology. However this may be, it can only be looked upon as a gain, that our men of science forsake the "harsh and crabbed" style of older times and give us their philosophy in sentences "musical as is Apollo's lute" and rich with all the adornments of allusion. By way of illustration let us run over an article of Professor Tyndall's in a recent number of the "Fortnightly," and note from what a variety of sources his allusions are drawn, and how different in this respect is the style from that which would have been adopted by a scientific writer of the older school.

"All the east was belted by that daffodil sky."

On a bed of daffodil sky.

—Tennyson's "*Maud*."

"The 'rose of dawn' is usually ascribed, and with sufficient correctness to transmitted light." Tennyson again, but this time from the "Vision of Sin."—

God made himself an awful rose of dawn.

"Through the reverberation of the rays from particle to particle of this matter, there must be at the very noon of

night a certain amount of illumination." A reminiscence of Byron.

Now in that noon of night.

Next we get a touch of St. Paul:—

The influence of the *inner man* as regards the enjoyment of external nature.

And then of a greater than Paul:—

The glory of the Alps descends upon a soul prepared to receive *its image and superscription*.

In the next paragraph, during the course of four lines, we have Mr. Matthew Arnold's "Sweetness and Light," a flying hint at Chrysostom, and Shakespeare twice over.

Having, through Chrysostom, got into the Book of Common Prayer, it is not surprising to find a little further on the venerable Catechism made use of, thus:—

The morality of clean blood ought to be one of the first lessons taught by our *pastors and masters*.

And, as might be expected in one who knows what style is, the Bible is constantly drawn upon both for turns of expression and illustrative images:—

It is not good to go altogether without food in these climbing expeditions.

#### *A Character.*

So poor Hathelwood is gone at last. He was a kind Christian soul and a good parson, who did his duty, not "by the lord," but by the poor. His favourite sentiment, which he used to air at tea-parties and the like, was taken out of Goldsmith—you know where: "Old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine." To this he would add with a chuckle, "and old women." Well, at any rate, he was consistent; and stuck by the old ways in

things small as well as great. He is said to have used one hired coach with the same driver for more than thirty years. Chariot and charioteer went together into utter and most disreputable delapidation; but nothing would induce our friend to transfer his patronage. At length, one hot summer's afternoon, as the equipage was toiling up a steep street, the bottom gave way, and the old man fell slowly through into the dust. But even then his remonstrance was mild. "This is more than enough," he said, "more than enough, my friend. Now we *must* make a change."

*Personality in the Light of Dreams.*

The web of dreams is drawn from experiences, impressions and thoughts which have been laid up in the memory. They arise haphazard and without rational sequence, the over-sense, or will, or judgment, or whatever we may call it, which acts when we are awake, being inoperative during sleep.

In consequence of this all sorts of incongruities and absurdities follow each other. Dead persons are continually appearing, as alive, but living persons are rarely, if ever, represented as dead.

Composition both in prose and verse may occur, and sometimes in felicitous forms; both these and also exquisite music (occasionally heard) may, though but seldom, be recalled after waking. I especially remember hearing in a dream some enchanting strains of music which I think were connected with Tennyson's line—

The horns of Elfland faintly blowing.

In this case I remembered the musical sounds in the morning, and, although the recollection seemed less delicate than the dream-original, I am convinced that its general character was the same. I may add that the impression was so strong that though years have elapsed I can recall it and mentally reproduce it still.

Actual occurrences are sometimes mingled with dreams or intrude upon them, but these, I think, always break the dream. Sensations, such as pain or hunger, may also interject themselves or even start the dream.

The personality, then, during dreams is clouded or ineffectual, but it retains intact its individuality and indestructability.

Although, as I have said, dreams are generally the reproductions of actual experience in a distorted form, there is, I think, reason to believe that this is not always the case, but that sometimes there is really no connecting link and no exercise of the memory—the dream being the result of an independent working of the mind under abnormal conditions.

In dealing with this subject a question to be solved is: Why is it that in dreams ideas appear to us as realities, not as things remembered or imagined? Does this occur only when the controlling power of the will is removed by sleep, or narcotics, or anæsthetics, or by brain disease?

\* \* \*

## A Preacher Poet.

BY THOMAS NEWBIGGING.

I VENTURE to introduce you to a genuine poet who is scarcely known to the majority of readers. I allude to the late Rev. Dr. Walter Chalmers Smith, of Edinburgh, the author of several volumes of poetry produced in the course of his lifetime.

Walter Smith was well known in Edinburgh, and in the North generally, as the "Poet Preacher." I prefer to think of him as the "Preacher Poet," as it was only on rare occasions, of which I gladly availed myself, that I had the privilege of listening to his pulpit ministrations, whereas his poetry has always strongly appealed to me.

In the briefest words I will recall some of the salient facts of his life.

Walter Chalmers Smith was born in Aberdeen in 1824, of humble parentage, educated at the Grammar School and Marischal College, taking his M.A. degree in 1841. His intention at first was to be a lawyer, and with that object in view he proceeded to Edinburgh to study for the Bar. This was in 1843, the year of the "Disruption" of the Scottish Church; but, influenced by the eloquent and strenuous advocacy of Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Guthrie and other leaders of the Free Church movement, he was caught in the wave of enthusiasm when the Disruption had become a fact, and resolved to devote himself to the ministry of that Church, being ordained in 1850.

His first charge was the Presbyterian Church at Pentonville, London; but he stayed here only three or four years, accepting, in 1854, a call to Orwell Parish, Kinross-

shire. His fame as a preacher carried him, in 1858, to Roxburgh Free Church, Edinburgh. Four years later, in 1862, he was called to the Free Tron Church, Glasgow, where he ministered for fourteen years with a growing reputation as a preacher of eloquence and power. In 1876 he returned to Edinburgh as minister of the Free High Church; and here he remained till his retirement in 1894. His death took place at his residence, Orwell Cottage, Kinbuck, near Dunblane, in September, 1908, when he was within three months of his 85th year. His remains rest in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh.

During his Glasgow ministry, the liberal tendency of his preaching created some disquiet among the straiter section of his ministerial brethren, due to his known sympathy with Dr. Norman McLeod's views on Sabbath observance, and they found occasion to institute a charge of heresy, based on certain views which Mr. Smith had expressed in one of a series of lectures on "The Sermon on the Mount," wherein he had contended that the "Law of Moses" had not only been fulfilled, but, in a certain sense, abrogated by the coming and teaching of Christ. Mr. Smith adhered to his expressed views, of which he gave his own interpretation, and the Assembly's decision was that, "while there was nothing erroneous in Mr. Smith's doctrine, his statement of doctrine was liable to serious misconstruction." Ending with an admonition to more guarded expression of his views. It is pleasant to know that he lived to become "Moderator" of the Church—the highest honour to which a Scottish Free Church Divine can attain. So much for the man.

"The Bishop's Walk" is the first of his books, and the least attractive from the subject point of view. It appeared in 1861, not under his own name, but under the pseudonym of "Orwell," the name of his first parish. Although the subject is not calculated to appeal to general readers, the poem is a fine one, and the treatment shows the breadth of the poet's mind—a feature that distinguishes all his



writings—and his capability of entering into the feelings of others whose ways of thinking were different from his own.

It deals with the vexed ecclesiastical polemics in Scotland when the episcopal Bishop Leighton occupied the See of Dunblane during the sixties of the 17th century. "Here," says the poet in the preface to the Book:—"Here was a servant of God who found himself ranged on the devil's side in the great conflict of the age, though fully minded all the while to fight the battle of the Lord." The poet tries to solve the problem of the good Bishop's life and give a faithful portraiture of the man as influenced and moulded by the times in which he lived; justifying, so far as might be, the position he took up in that troublous age. To the poet, indeed, Leighton ("the Scottish Fenelon") appeared "about as beautiful a spirit as ever lighted on this earth—an angel whom Scotland entertained quite unawares, and certainly not with an angel's entertainment." In the same volume he depicts some aspects in the characters of certain of the protagonists among the Covenanting party of the time; amongst others, Balfour of Burley and Peden the prophet. He narrates also the tragedy of the fifteen hundred prisoners shut up in the old Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh, and gives "The Confessions of Annaple Gowdie, Witch," exhibiting a grotesque and gruesome humour that makes one regret he did not oftener essay this particular vein. The reader will not overlook the dedication in verse to John Hunter, Esq., of Craigerook. No more charming dedicatory poem has ever been penned.

His next volume, "Olrig Grange," was published in 1872, under the pen name of "Hermann Künst, Philologue, Professor," though in subsequent editions his own name appears on the title-page. Why he should have chosen an outlandish German *nom-de-plume* it is hard to say, unless it was due to his unostentatious modesty (one of his chief attributes throughout his long life) or in hopes

to preserve his anonymity (which, however, he was unable to do) taking account of his position as a minister.

The opening of "Olrig Grange" is a fine description of an old mansion house and the near village embosomed in the scenery of a quiet country side:—

The slim grey house with its heraldic beasts,  
Nestling in its scant acre of flower-plots  
And green sward, at the end of the elm-tree drive,  
Stood plainly in ancestral dignity,  
Aloof from citizen's villa; shorn of wealth,  
It was the home of culture and simple taste,  
And heir of fine traditions.

The Asgards of Olrig were an old stock, lairds of the barren moorland only. But later generations of the family, with greater enterprise, took to sea fishery, and "swept the coast with net and yawl," and, further north, "in iron-bound floats they speared the Arctic whale." So they grew rich and improved their lands, and passed away:—

But the last Burgher-laird died young, and left  
Many large ventures on the perilous sea,  
And in more perilous mines. His gentle widow,  
Harassed by alien cares, retired at length  
With her twin children from the 'wildering task,  
Cheerfully leaving three parts of her wealth  
Somewhere—she knew not where—in falling scrip,  
And flooded mines, and meshes of the law.

But in spite of reverses, a happy mother, she lived for her children,

trained them faithfully,  
With generous culture to all nobleness,  
Giving them for inheritance the wealth  
Of the old wisdom and the new research;  
And then she also died.

The twin brother and sister, Thorold and Hester, last of

the Asgards of Orlig, were thus left with their tutor, Herr Professor Künst, Philologus, to make or mar their future fortunes.

By the door of the mansion, where it was hid by honeysuckle sprays and briar-rose that trailed around the porch, there stood a youth. This is Thorold:—

He was

A student who had travelled many a field  
Of arduous learning, planted venturous foot  
On giddy ledge of speculative thought,  
And searched for truth o'er mountain, shore and sea,  
In stone and flower, and every living thing  
Where he might read the open secret of God  
With his own eyes, and ponder out its meaning.

Trained for a priest, there was purity in all his thoughts,  
and his heart went out with manifold sympathies to the  
many among his fellowmen who were outcast and alone:

But being challenged at the door

Of God's high Temple to induce himself  
With armour that he had not proved, to clothe  
With articles of readymade Belief  
His Faith inquisitive, he rent the Creed  
Trying to fit it on, and cast it from him;  
Then took it up again, and found it worn  
With age, and riddled by the moth, and rotten.  
Therefore he trod it under foot, and went  
Awhile with only scant fig-leaves to clothe  
His naked spirit, longing after God,  
But striving more for knowledge than for faith.

And so the priest was left behind, and pursuit of Fame  
took the place of the hope of Glory. After long conference  
with his sister he determines to go out into the world—  
the world of London. Here he is enthralled with the  
votaries of fashion, falls in love, and is unfortunate in his  
love, the loved one finally rejecting him on the ground  
that she is unworthy. He returns to his native northern  
village, disappointed, broken in health.

The story, *qua* story, is nothing; the self-revelation of the different characters is everything, and in this consists the supreme interest of the poem. Here is the description of Lady Anne Dewhurst, the Mater Domina, mother of Rose with whom Thorold had fallen in love, in her bright boudoir in Belgravia, where she sat with a rug of sable over her knees:—

Most perfectly arrayed in shapely robe  
Of sumptuous satin, lit up here and there  
With scarlet touches, and with costly lace  
Nice-fingered maidens knitted in Brabant;  
And all around her spread magnificence  
Of bronzes, Sèvres vases, marquetric,  
Rare buhl, and bric-a-brac of every kind,  
From Rome and Paris and the centuries  
Of far-off beauty.

All of form and colour that could delight the eye lay  
around in orderly disorder, while flowers scented the warm  
air with perfume:—

Stately and large and beautiful she was  
Spite of her sixty summers, with an eye  
Trained to soft languors, that could also flash,  
Keen as a sword and sharp—a black bright eye,  
Deep sunk beneath an arch of jet.

But withal she had a weary look—a weariness that seemed  
not so native as the worldliness with which it was blended.  
A sybaritic gloom was hers. She—

Had quite resigned herself to misery  
In this sad vale of tears, but fully meant  
To nurse her sorrow in a sumptuous fashion,  
And make it an expensive luxury;  
For nothing she esteemed that nothing cost.

And mark the delicious irony in the lines that follow:—

Beside her, on a table round, inlaid  
With precious stones by Roman Art designed,  
Lay phials, scents, a novel and a Bible,  
A pill-box and a wine glass, and a book

On the Apocalypse; for she was much  
 Addicted unto physic and religion,  
 And her physician had prescribed for her  
 Jellies and wines and cheerful literature.  
 The book on the Apocalypse was writ  
 By her chosen pastor, and she took the novel  
 With the dry sherry, and the pills prescribed.  
 A gorgeous, pious, comfortable life  
 Of misery she lived.

And as her special cross she bore all the sins of her house,  
 and of the nation and of all the world beside. These she  
 confessed, vicariously, day by day—

and then

She comforted her heart, which needed it,  
 With bric-a-brac and jelly and old wine.

Her self-revelations in her recriminating advice to her  
 daughter follow, and they are of the choicest. No more  
 scathing exposure of fashionable folly, dashed with  
 religion (so-called), has ever engaged the pen of any  
 satirist.

Not less admirably drawn is the portrait of Pater, the  
 Squire, the husband of Mater Domina. The grey old man  
 is addicted to far other occupations than those of his wife,  
 and perhaps as fruitless. He is a dilettante—a dabbler in  
 various pursuits. He believed he understood

Beetle-browed Science, wrestling with the fact  
 To find its meaning clear; but all in vain,

although he had bought many costly instruments and  
 made experiments and attended lectures:—

He thought he thought, and yet he did not think,  
 But only echoed still the common thought  
 As might an empty room. . . .  
 He could but skim and dip, like restless swallow  
 Fly-catching on the surface of all knowledge  
 Anthropologic and Botanical,  
 And Chemical, and what was last set forth  
 By charlatan to stun the vulgar sense.

There was yet a strain of noble chivalry in his nature,

and a faint, crisp humour rippled his thought, and might have been a joy had life been kindlier to him :—

But his cheeriest smile  
Verged on a sneer, and ran to mocking laughter.  
Yet under all his pottering at science,  
And deeper than his feeble cynic sneer,  
Lay a great love, to which he fondly clung,  
For Rose, the stately daughter of his house.

Poor Rose! victim of fashion and folly and unreality, and with neither hope nor will to make her escape, had good reason to despise the twain—both Mater and Pater, and whose life was shattered by her artificial and heartless environment. But enough; I have dealt, as far as my space allows, on this remarkable poem—not so much for its final outcome, which is less satisfactory than one would be led to expect, but for the insight into human character which it displays; the deep springs of feeling, the conflict of emotions, the searchings of heart, the disappointments, griefs and shortcomings of life for the wisest and strongest not less than for the weakest of life's votaries. And the humour of it all—the deep pathos of it all! It abounds also with charming descriptions of the grand North Sea that stretches to Norwegian fiords, and, more northerly still, to Greenland and Archangel; descriptions of natural scenery and the simpler objects that nature yields to the seeing eye, are often to be met with. Apt classical allusions, too, there are, that lend breadth and dignity to the stanzas.

“ Borland Hall ” followed in 1875, a thrilling story told in marvellous verse and in many keys, maugre an occasional lapse in measure which can be forgiven amidst the general excellence.

Its opening scenes are in the far Northern University town :—

Between the Don and the Dee  
Looking over the grey sand dunes,  
Looking out on the cold North Sea.

With its college life, where—

Sitting o' nights in his silent room,  
The student hears the lonesome boom  
Of the breaking waves on the long sand reach,  
And the churning of pebbles along the beach;  
And gazing out on the level ground,  
Or the hush of keen stars wheeling round,  
He *feels* the silence in the sound.

But there is a far other sound in the room overhead,  
a sound of revelry, where a party of students are holding  
high jinks, and one and another sings in the intervals  
between their wild converse, and banter, and laughter—  
Ralph, Darrel and Hugh, and Little Tom Guild, and  
other choice spirits. Some of the songs are of exquisite  
tenderness and beauty: "She is a woman to love, to love"  
(reminding one of the Troubadour and Minnesinger ditties),  
"Bonnie Mysie Gordon," "Up in the North," and others,  
humorous and pathetic. Then—

A clinking of glasses and ringing of bells,  
And song after song till the daylight draws near—  
Ralph sings like a bird, how his voice trills and swells!  
And the rogues make a chorus that catches the ear;  
Love song and drinking song, madrigal, glee,  
Breaking in on the long-rolling boom of the sea.

And so youth has its fling! While there may be some  
grounds (in occasional instances) for the common belief  
that the Scottish University student pursues his studies  
fortified only by "a little oatmeal," it is not universally true.  
That by no means exhausts his bill of fare. We have it on  
the authority of our poet that there is,

The flask of old wine, grey with cobwebs, whose scent  
Made the grim spiders jolly in bloated content.

And then, more luxurious still—

Oh for my Horace's Daphne or Phyllis,  
Low-browed and breathing of wreathed Amaryllis;  
How her eyes beam, and her golden curls break,  
Like tangled laburnum drops, round her white neck!

And why not? Why should phantoms of beauty and grace be but shadows all, and nothing be true—all but vanity, dream and inanity?—

How was it that Goethe in full measure tasted  
All that life had to give him, nor missed aught, nor wasted!  
Sat Shakespeare alone thus, and heard the dogs bark,  
Like an owl in a barn staring into the dark?

Did they shrink from love-trysts, song, or bright-beaded wine,  
As if only the dullness of life were divine?

Certainly not, and so they were rich in the glorious sense of a world-wide experience! This, be it noted, is not the preacher speaking in his own person. That would be, à *outrance*, derogatory to his office. The dramatic form is so prevalent in Dr. Smith's poetry that one must be careful not to confound the views or motives of the *Dramatis Personæ* with those of the author. These are the worldly ruminations of Austen Lyell as he sits musing in his college room. But at length he starts from his reverie, and with a cry of pain, asks:—

What demon is this, with the logic of Hell,  
That pleads for the wild Beast within me so well?

So, having exorcised the tempter, his thoughts take another direction. They turn to his mother and home as he pleads:—

Help me, O God, that my life may yet prove  
True to Thy thought, and the hope of her love.

And eventually he carries high honours from the University down to his home in the hill country, "foremost scholar the year had seen."

And proud was the mother that bore him then  
Though little she said, for that was her way.



And the villagers liked the young laird as he mixed with them pleasantly, for—

learning still  
Is more esteemed among the folk  
Who till the glebe, or watch the flock  
In lonely glen, or on silent hill,  
Than wealth of gold.

But, so far, this is only the prelude to a story of tragic pathos of which Austen Lyell is the hero. "Borland's Widow," the "hard-visaged and hardened" mother of Austen, is about as extraordinary a character as is to be found in fiction, and the narrative of her life's doings, to which her son is called on to listen, is outlined with matchless strength and skill. As the result of this, Austen's career is utterly diverted from its intended course, and its unravelling constitutes thenceforth the supreme interest of the book. Paul and Millie Gaunt, brother and sister, are delightful characters, two winning souls that one would have liked to know personally. And for caustic humour the appreciative reader will revel in the story of Andrew Downie, Esq., newspaper proprietor, who is on the look out for "a man of original powers" to fill the post of editor. "Borland Hall" is a fine story with a wealth of characterisation, as in all Dr. Smith's poetry.

His next book, "Hilda among the Broken Gods," appeared in 1878. Hilda has married a poet, and a tragic incompatibility leads eventually to estrangement. The broken gods are: differing views, visions disillusioned, shattered lights, hopes unrealised, vanished dreams, darkened faith, the *lares et penates* in the dust. A sad, sweet poem that should be read. One is apt to wonder how much of experience and how much of intuition or perception prompted the book. In either case, full of a weighty thoughtfulness and fraught with lessons that should not fall on dull ears. It does not need much rummaging of the literary basket to find examples of the counterpart of this poem.

There is nothing didactic in its strain—any more than there is in a good fable minus the application—yet full of didactic wisdom—if the paradox may be allowed. The whole poem is full of good things. Hilda in her weakness grows strong through suffering, and at last it could be said:—

Weep, yet rejoice! for her unselfish deeds,  
 Mightier than words, have bidden doubt away,  
 And led him into light of better day,  
 And Love, which is the soul of all the Creeds.

There are few poets better worth reading than Walter Smith, and few poems worthier of reading and study than "Hilda." Amongst five of his books it is difficult to decide which is the best; but this, by some critics, is considered to be his masterpiece.

"Raban," his next volume, was published in 1881. In the estimation of some it does not rank as high as the two preceding volumes. To my thinking, if it is not the most charming of the series, it is the one that would most attract the majority of readers. It is largely a record of the author's own experience, and so the personal note is present throughout.

The argument of the book is this: In the introduction is given a description of the man Raban; his character, his aims in life, his failures, his trials and successes. When first I knew him—

Raban was already  
 Verging on age, yet full of lusty life;  
 With all his senses perfect to enjoy  
 The fatness and the sweetness of the earth,  
 And all its beauty; and with all his mind  
 Perfect to do its work—to reason well,  
 To play with graceful fancy, or mirthful jest  
 That rushed from him, like spark from glowing steel,  
 I' the clash of argument.

But these were the least of his gifts. He could "soar into realms of thought that touch the stars." As he grew in age his heart still continued young,

And nothing loved so much  
As the fresh hopes of noble-purposed youth  
Not yet desponding of a glorious world.

His humour, too, was of the daintiest, and,

he knew  
Affairs and books and men, and it was like  
Great music just to sit beside the fire,  
And hearken his discourse.

He had once sought the priest's office as the humble pastor of a humble flock, but it was scarcely his vocation to sermonise until his thought was thin, and listen to the parish gossip, and grow small with its small interests. And then, perhaps, he was hardly what men call "orthodox," although, on the whole, his faith was true to the old creeds:—

He kept their spirit,  
Only the framework, and the rigid joinings  
Clamped as with iron, by much-hammered texts,  
He loosened.

So he retired from his pastoral charge and took to scholastic work,

in his leisure hours,  
Penning brief essays, quaintly humorous,  
Or thoughtful with the flavour of a soul  
Fresh from the vision of a dewy world  
That still seemed very good.

The poet then relates how he became acquainted with Raban:—

I met him first when hunting for a book  
Among the stalls, where he was hunting too,  
Now his life's chiefest business, and its joy:  
And I, being fearful that he sought the same  
Rare volume, looked askance at him, and weighed  
My scanty purse with his, doubtful; till he

Who knew book-hunting minds, and slender means,  
 Saluted me, and we grew friends ere long,  
 Having a common love of curious lore.  
 Thus meeting, by and by, I found my way  
 Into his home, which once had been made bright  
 By a fair helpmate, and by joyous girls  
 Lightsome as flowers, but it was lonely now,  
 And silent, for they all had gone before  
 Into the silent land.

Then follows a description of Raban's library, well calculated to delight the book-lover, but on this I must not dwell. Suffice it to say that eventually Raban died—and the story of his departure is a pathetic one—leaving to the poet all his literary treasures and his unpublished manuscripts. These make up the volume and are comprised under the heads: "Preludes," "The House in the Square," "The Licentiate," "Crystallised Sermons," "The Literature," "Endings," and "Stray Leaves."

It would occupy too much of my space to comment on all these, and to speak of all the delightful lyrics scattered through the pages of Raban. The "Crystallised Sermons" are worth whole volumes of theology at its choicest. But I cannot resist calling special attention to the story of "The House in the Square," tenanted by the widow and her three clever and lovable daughters, Muriel, Loo and Myra—a house with its inmates beloved of the college students, and with good reason. No more charming picture was ever painted than is contained in the four poems in which the kindly widow and her three daughters are described. A verse or two:—

O the House in the Square! dear House in the Square!  
 With its little grass-plots and the mouldy green tubs  
 Where the hoops fell away from the pale-flowering shrubs;  
 But the widow was kind, and her daughters were fair,  
 And all the day long there was sunshine there,  
     In the House in the Square.

Their Father, a scholar, would have them beware  
How they squandered their lives on the shallow and sweet;  
They should know what men knew, to be helps to them meet;  
And the learning he loved he was eager to share  
With the daughters he loved, until death found him there  
At the House in the Square.

We were all of us poor; but we did not much care,  
For we sought the best riches of wisdom and truth  
With the courage of faith, and the ardour of youth;  
And with Homer and Shakespeare for friends, we could bear  
The dust of the carriage that passed with a stare,  
At the House in the Square.

Just a verse or two from the poet's glowing eulogy of  
each of the three brave girls:—

Muriel:

Whoever spoke to Muriel, thought  
Her looks are nothing to her speech;  
That girl a noble strain has got,  
And soars beyond the common reach;  
Yet with her high and daring mood,  
And with her faith in human good,  
Will she be ever understood?

A beautiful enigma she,  
Our Muriel, with the dark bright eyes!  
And still her beauty seemed to be  
Flashed on you with a fresh surprise:  
And when they left her, men would look  
As if inspired by some great Book  
That did their meaner soul rebuke.

And Loo (who had now married a German professor):

Loo, Loo! where on earth can she be?  
A Frau they tell me in Germany,  
Seeing to Saur Kraut, plump and fair;  
Now in the store-room, now at the dresser,  
Kitchen-maid, waiting-maid to her Professor,  
Just as she was at the House in the Square.

## A PREACHER POET

Loo, Loo! it was always her way;  
 She said men were failures, and had had their day,  
 But women were versatile, nimble as air,  
 Fit for the humblest tasks, fit for the highest,  
 Pouring life-blood into themes that were driest,—  
 Happy Professor, put under her care!

And Myra:

She was the fairest of all the three;  
 Yet not at first she caught the eye,  
 For in her maiden meakness she  
 Woo'd shadow like the primrose shy,  
 And seventeen summers hardly brought  
 Her lissom form to perfect grace,  
 And the great purple eyes still shot  
 Too large a light on the oval face;  
 Yet she was fairest of all the three  
 E'en were she nothing at all to me.

\* \* \* \* \*

She was the sweetest of them—sweet  
 As summer air from clover field;  
 And had a charity complete,  
 A touch, too, and a word that healed,  
 And therewith, oh so blithe a heart!  
 That she would laugh as birds must sing,  
 But could not play a bitter part  
 That she might say a clever thing.  
 Wisest, sweetest, fairest she,  
 E'en were she nothing at all to me.

No finer trio of delightful girls was ever pictured.  
 A word on another character-sketch in the volume:  
 "Miss Penelope Leith," with her fine old-world contempt  
 of new fashions and of the "mim-folk, who, mincing  
 English said or sung." A staunch old crusted Tory:—

Her politics were of the age  
 Of Claverhouse or Bolingbroke;  
 Still at the Dutchman she would rage,  
 And still of gallant Grahame she spoke.

She swore 'twas right that Whigs should die  
    Psalm-snivelling in the wind and rain,  
Though she would ne'er have harmed a fly  
    For buzzing on the window pane.  
And she had many a plaintive rhyme  
    Of noble Charlie and his men ;  
For her there was no later time,  
    All history had ended then.

But, clinging to her old-world creed, the dear old sinner had a kindly heart, "and many a sorrow she made glad and many a tender mercy wrought."

"Kildrostan," which appeared in 1884, is a striking dramatic poem. The denouement is obvious enough before the conclusion, but there is fine characterisation throughout, and the interest never flags. Like the Greek play, of which in some respects it is an imitation, the "Chorus" both opens and concludes each scene, and gives a veiled inkling of the coming event. One might be reading Sophocles, or the more humanistic Euripides, as the drama progresses; the stern Highland scenery where the story is cast giving a weirdness of outline to the whole conception, relieved by the cultured dignity of the heroine. Sir George Douglas, commenting upon it, expresses the opinion that "Kildrostan" is the most successful of its author's works, and the play the form most favourable to the display of his talents. Without endorsing this opinion to the full, I venture to say that it is a question whether, that, had our poet chosen to preach from the play-boards instead of from the pulpit he would not have made his mark as a dramatist. For, indeed, the dramatic element is strong throughout the whole of his work.

"North Country Folk," published in 1887, consists of a score of character sketches true to the life and full of dramatic force; grim stories some of them, each distinct in itself and with an insight that goes down to the very roots of human feeling and conduct. They are all interesting, but four of them stand out as masterpieces: "Wee Curly

Pow," a fine story full of tragic pathos, beautifully told;  
 " Dick Dagleish,"

Just a mechanic with big, broad head,—  
 Carpenter, maybe, or engineer—  
 Deft with a skilled hand at winning his bread,  
 Scornful of varnish and show and veneer.

And " Deacon Dorat's Story," telling of how they  
cut him down,  
 The last in our place that was hung in chains,  
 Left to bleach in the suns and rains  
 On the gallow-hill of our Burgh town.

Of their kind I do not know anything better. Nor would I omit to make mention of " Dr. Linkletter's Scholar"—" the brilliant scholar," says Mr. J. M. Barrie, " who forgot his dominie . . . a poem as true as life, as sad as death. If only for the sake of that noble piece of writing, every student should have ' North Country Folk ' in his possession." A poem, indeed, of such unaffected pathos as haunts and humanises the heart, while it enriches the memory. But all the contents are good and rich in imaginative power. I would hardly venture to say that " North Country Folk " is the best of the series of volumes; but there is this quality in all Dr. Smith's books, that the one last read always seems the best.

His remaining volumes are " A Heretic and other Poems," " Ballads from Scottish History," and " Thoughts and Fancies for Sunday Evenings." In the first-named, among much else that is excellent, is included a striking poem entitled, " What Pilate thought of it," carrying the mind back with realistic vividness to the days of King Herod, Imperial Cæsar and the tragedy of Calvary.

The " Thoughts and Fancies " are not of the ordinary run of religious verse, but a series of thoughtful poems throbbing with intense emotional sympathy, hope and charity—applicable to almost every phase and condition of



life—to the stilling of the conflicting doubts and fears that trouble the soul. A verse or two from the last poem in the volume, dealing with prayers for the dead, will appeal to many a heart :—

Living we sought for blessings on their head ;  
Why should our lips be sealed when they are dead,  
And we alone ?

Idle ? their doom is fixed ? Ah ! who can tell ?  
Yet were it so, I think no harm could well  
Come of my prayer ;  
And oh the heart, o'erburdened with its grief,  
This comfort needs, and finds therein relief  
From its despair.

Shall God be wroth because we love them still,  
And call upon His love to shield from ill  
Our dearest, best,  
And bring them home, and recompense their pain,  
And cleanse their sin, if any sin remain,  
And give them rest ?

Nay, I will not believe it. I will pray  
As for the living, for the dead each day.  
They will not grow  
Less meet for heaven when followed by a prayer  
To speed them home ; like summer-scented air  
From long ago.

Who shall forbid the heart's desires to flow  
Beyond the limits of the things we know ?  
In Heaven above  
The incense that the golden censers bear  
Is the sweet perfume from the saintly prayer  
Of trust and love.

Dr. Smith was a deep student of nature, of birds, and flowers, of trees and streams, the sea and rocks ; of clouds and stars and suns,—all lend beauty and choice imagery to his fruitful pen. And not these only, or chiefly ; but mainly of humankind, their joys and sorrows, their glad-

some moods and their heartbreaks and sins. There is much of thought and thought-compelling reverie in his poems on matters that concern mortals and the ministries of good and evil. Quaint fancies, too, striking rich veins that kindle the imagination of the reader. Scholar also, as well as preacher and poet; skilled in the lore of ancient Greece and Rome; an intense book-lover, discoursing on old tomes and rare works:—

Of pale-vellumed classics . . .  
Aldine editions costly, beautiful—  
And many tiny Elzevirs—and Scotch  
Imprints at Capmahoun—tall copies scarce—  
Fair tomes emitted by the press beloved  
Of him who, praising Folly, smote the monk  
And grinned out of his hood.

His humour is of that chastened kind which befits the cloth, but it is very pervading. In all his poetry there is amazing fertility of description, with wealth of illustration; side-lights on science and art and fine classical allusions. His minute characterisation is a remarkable feature of the whole of his poems, which contain a wonderful gallery of portraits. Portraits of children, young men and maidens, students of art and science, sturdy manhood of the peasant and artizan classes, statesmen, philosophers, preachers, theologians, materialists, poets, heroes and martyrs—portraits clear in every line and speaking likenesses every one. With these as subjects, and out of the simplest materials, he constructs many a striking story. I speak advisedly when I say that there are few *raconteurs* of a story in verse that are equal to him, and of this one might give a score of examples from his books. There is another attribute of his,—and it characterises all the greater masters of song,—his sustained power of description and philosophising. He pursues his subject in all its windings, opening up unexpected vistas at every turn, and the close shows no falling off in quality. Kindly and unobtrusive by nature, he won his way to the

hearts of men; indeed, the chief characteristic of Dr. Smith, both as preacher and poet, was his broad humanity, his charity and his fine freedom from narrow dogmatism.

There are occasional echoes of Tennyson and Browning in his poetry, but they are faint and few. It is more the ancient Greek fountain at which he drank than any more modern spring. There is Greek beauty and Greek tragedy in much of his writing. But he is not to be classified with any poet, either ancient or modern, his peculiar treatment of subjects bearing the stamp of originality; in this respect it may almost be described as *outré*.

In many of his poems there breathes a kind of religious secularity—if the expression may be allowed. Fearlessly sincere and strong in his views, which were in advance of his time, there is yet running through his work an all-embracing charity towards differing opinions. Like his Master, he did not scruple at times to sit at meat with publicans and sinners, whatever the Pharisees might say or think. Shams, wherever he found them, were his aversion. Every now and then, as we read, we are startled with a ruffling phrase or sentiment in line or verse, and we look up from the page and ask, "Is this the voice of the preacher?" Then comes the answer: "How sane he is! How full of the best kind of sense! How little was he a being apart, like many of his clerical brethren, from the hearts of the people!" I can readily imagine that the outcome of his poetical gift was not altogether acceptable to some of the staid, not to say dour, dispositions among his flock. If they read what he wrote there must have been an arching of the eyebrows, or a darkening of the countenances of some of the members of his church as they came across certain of his lines. Others again, broader-minded, would be proud of their pastor who was also the poet that he was.

He brought a sacred spirit  
Unto the secular task, and called on men  
To follow lofty aims and noble deeds.

Even when he laughed at fools, his mirth would be  
 Pitiful, and when he would edge his tools  
 Sharper to smite the wooden wit o' the time,  
 Yet it was in some cause of righteousness,  
 Or large humanity.

—*Raban.*

His defects as a poet may be briefly summed up. He sometimes evinces a lack of rapid progression in the telling of a story, causing the reader to lose the thread of the narrative in the absence of concentrated attention. This is due to his extraordinary facility in versification. His patient pursuance of a theme is remarkable; in some cases it almost amounts to satiety, even when the theme is brimful of interest. It must be admitted also that many of his lines, however rich in substance, are hardly poetical in form. As prose, and in what they embody, they are by no means weak, but the ideas are not expressed poetically.

Certain critics have complained of a ruggedness, a want of polish, in some of his lines. Well, he had all the old Viking spirit in his constitution, and a roughness at times, like his own northern granite, is almost a virtue. He could be polished enough, like that same granite, as occasion served. But, whether rough or smooth, the close-grained substance of his ideas is always evident, and therein consists one of his many excellencies. The exigencies of measure and rhyme—tools with which he works—are sometimes a poet's undoing, and it may be admitted that there is now and then a halting measure in Dr. Smith's verses, and an occasional rhyme which a critical taste would censure; but in all his poetical work there is not a line to be found to which the epithet "namby-pamby" can be applied. Few poets, however great, if put to it, would stand such a test. He wrote rapidly, and did not (as he himself declares) attempt to melodise his lines so long as their meaning was plain.

The question may not unnaturally be asked: What rank as a poet may be claimed for Walter Smith? I certainly would not classify him as a "minor poet"; neither would I

change the adjective and put "great" instead. He is a poet, he evinces true poetic genius, and that should be enough classification or description to satisfy the most exacting. His style is his own, and I venture to say that without claiming for him the distinction of great poet, he did write as good things as did any of those on whom we bestow that title, just as they excelled him in the writing of other things. His was, without question, the *afflatus divinus*, "God gives speech to all, song to the few," and he is of that few. I can well imagine a judge of poetry—and a good judge too—saying of Dr. Smith: "He is a favourite poet of mine."

It would be well, I think, to abandon the misleading practice of labelling this one and the other as a "minor poet." When we speak of a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer, even if the man to whom we are referring is not in the forefront of his profession, we never dub him a minor doctor, or a minor lawyer, or a minor engineer. Where does major end and minor begin? All poets are minor to Shakespeare, and so, forsooth, Keats, Shelley, Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, are in that sense minor poets? We never speak of a minor prose writer. Then why the other?

Granted his indisputable claims as a poet, what, it may be asked, has been the cause of his comparative lack of wide recognition as such? I say it advisedly, that, apart from his innate modesty of disposition—which led him to bargain with his publishers that there should be no "puffing" of his books to influence purchasers—the very fact of his being a minister of the Gospel has interfered with not only the popularity but the appreciation of his poetical work. Can any good poetry come out of the pulpit? The answer may be found in Dr. Smith's volumes. Had he been other than a minister his poetry would have had the vastly wider audience it deserves. But his day will come; the future is with the poet.

## Boyhood.

BY J. E. CRAVEN.

WE all know what boyhood means, but we cannot know what another will say about it. In this case, at the time of writing this sentence, I do not know myself. I sometimes think our memories are like the *Advocatus Diaboli*, bringing up only what is unpleasant and upbraiding, whilst the happy moments glide away calling for no special recall. I have heard it said that we are happiest when so fully occupied as not to be conscious that we are happy, or of the flight of time. I cannot accept that. If it is true, it is sad to think that the delight of living is when we are in a comatose state, and not conscious of worry, pain or ennui. Happiness is more than the negation of weariness or unpleasant sensation. I consider it a slander on life to suggest that it is best lived in an anæsthetic condition. What of joy and ecstasy? Imagine passing your summer holidays under a state of chloroform.

Rest we must have, but life is a living wideawake thing, and I deny that there is

‘No rest but the grave for the Pilgrim of Life.’

When is life more lived than in boyhood? Why we start life with a thirst, which varies a great deal, but never leaves us—we move about before we have the proper use of our limbs, and run all sorts of risks, as if eager to begin our eventful career—we start singing without producing music, and some of us have kept at it ever since,—and we do things which alienate for the moment our best friends, and this practice we have also kept up by more varied means.

What strains we placed on our little elastic pliable limbs! We do it now on the same limbs, and sometimes they snap. Is infancy ever to be a blank? Shall we live over again in memory our earliest days? I hope not, although I should embrace the opportunity of explaining that what was put often down to my nasty temper, as a baby, should have been attributed to my nurse—a cruel pin—or somebody's neglect. We squalled as babies and nobody knew why we did so. We do so yet, with less excuse, because if we have good reason to squall we are now able to say what it is for, nor have we quite thrown off the habit of squealing acquired in the cradle. Something might be said in favour of a theory that many of our habits are formed in our infancy, and that after life is an effort to shed some, and develope others.

How far can you go back to the cradle in your recollection? Probably quite as far as is desirable. I think so, because the first thing I recollect was not pleasant. My nurse let me jump from a low fence wall into a field. I jumped down all right; but my little frock acted like a parachute, and when I landed on the ground I did not retain my feet, but sat down on a bed of nettles. I don't want to go any further back into regions of that kind. I think it must have been what local herbalists call a bee nettle-bed. Whilst I recollect this somewhat ancient event, I don't recollect any efforts made to appease me (for I feel certain I should call for help)—no sweets or cakes that were given or promised to me. The I.O.U.'s of infancy were rarely redeemed—they were barred by the statute of forgetfulness,—though as mere promises they were often successful.

We crept on 'midst many unwelcome kisses and a lot of complimentary, but untrue, remarks, into a more advanced stage of life. Why should such things be said? You can rarely go truthfully beyond saying of a baby, that it is "a fine child"—that will do for either a fat or thin child—and it is always a compliment to say "it is

like its father," although I see nothing remarkable in that. A fine woman is a big one. A fine thread is a thin one; a fine baby may be of any complexion, the only thing necessary is that the mother should hear what you say about it. But keep a few thoughts in reserve, and mind you do not betray yourself. I never slobber over a baby. I begin with them, when they think me capable of eating their dolls. Then they are interesting. When a child thinks you are voracious enough to eat his toys you can do something with him. He has got beyond the stage of stereotyped nursing; I mean those little caresses and joltings which everybody tries on with a baby. At a young age a child may weep from a hidden wound. These wounds have healed long ago, and others of a more enduring kind have doubtless appeared.

You do not recollect that climax in your infancy, when you were said "to begin to take notice," and when the event was proclaimed in the family and remarked by every visitor. You have been doing it ever since with very mixed feelings. Ultimately you were breeched, and all your dignity and troubles seemed to come at once.

For a long time you dared not stray "far from your home on life's rough way." You were the object of envy in some, and derision in others, and ultimately, by gradual stages, you were fairly launched into boyhood, and perplexed with its indulgence and its restraint. This you experienced at home. What probably struck you was that the indulgence was intermittent, and the restraint regular and constant. Then, and all through your life, outsiders have been telling you to break through restraint. Ridicule, one of the strongest weapons, was used by your playmates to urge you to do improper things. Oh, the tyranny of playmates! As a class they are often interfering and unsympathetic, urging juniors to do what the seniors know will get them into trouble, and which they dare not do themselves. Did you ever quarrel in your boyhood? Probably you have some little scar left to remind you of



the past. Every lad's prowess seemed to be known in the fighting-lists of the neighbourhood. It was known who could fight you, and whom you could fight. One battle perhaps led to a re-classification—sometimes successful bluff or bravado would do it. Occasionally things had to be readjusted; something had to be resented, somebody had to be punished. You had to live up to the traditions of your class, and within them. To defy them, or to introduce startling innovations, would expose you to ridicule or disfavour.

The tradition of boys is a most conservative thing, affecting the class of game played, the method of playing it, and the seasonable introduction of the game. Who starts the periodical revival of boys' games? They follow in regular succession year after year, varying as little as the appearance of the moon. I overtook a lad going to school, and asked him what game was in season. He did not seem to understand me; so I told him that when I was a lad there was a time for shuttlecock, peg-top and other games; and I again inquired, "what was on now." He grasped the situation, and said very indistinctly, for his mouth was full of something. "Oh, it's chewing India-rubber-time now!" Lads are slaves to fashion, and to be playing an unseasonable game or to be unable to indulge in a prevailing game is to lose caste.

There is a considerable amount of bullying and tyranny amongst boys. A lad begins early in life his lessons of endurance and restraint. A playground boycott is not a small matter, as long as it lasts. How often a parent spoils her child by always taking his side without knowing the real merits of the case. Some children will run home with their grievances, always sure of sympathy and encouragement. The fond parent never thinks the child may be at fault. Some children, on receiving the least pain, mental or physical, will run home and begin crying when about twenty yards from the house. This is a poor training for the struggles of life that must be ahead.

What were your ideals, your ambitions, when a boy? Did you long to be a grocer, so that you could get at the raisins? Did you not think the circus-clown something more than a man, and have you not escorted the gaudy vehicle for a mile out of town?

What were your attachments, your early loves? What simple methods you adopted to get into favour? How often have you looked your feelings into the eyes of some girl at church, although you never spoke to her? If your heart was not broken at twenty, it must have sustained many chippings. What nonsense is talked about the first love! It is lost in antiquity. How can anyone be expected to discriminate amongst so many. What is meant by first love may be most enduring, and that from which you cannot free yourself, if you wished. Beauty seems to be the apparent possession of those qualities which we admire, and which we diagnose by a glance.

Do you ever blush at your clumsiness in your youth, at your efforts to get acquainted with some girl or to obtain her favour? I remember sending a couple of sweets to a girl who was playing at skipping-rope, but it got me more ridicule than favour. How ready young folks are to peck at each other, and to ridicule some well-meant and innocent thing, if a little unusual and awkward. But when you're in love, you're excited, your cool judgment is suspended. To you the thing is real and of vital importance, its gravity upsets your nerves. How else can you explain my sending two sweets by a messenger, instead of taking them myself? The messenger was blunt and tactless, but I might have been more so.

How about life at home with your family and the many and varied events that happened,—the affection, the kindness, the misunderstandings, the ephemeral estrangements, and the real delinquencies?

I am not alluding to parental rebukes,—that is an unpleasant subject,—they have now become "moments of emotion remembered in tranquility." What a world you

have in the home! Its sunshine and its shadows, its happiness and its tragedies, its misplaced blame, and its vindications!

We went to school with the severe maxim, "Spoil the rod and mend the child." Those days, when school-hours were so tedious, and the clocks seemed to be almost at a standstill, but after school the interval between school and darkness seemed to fly at an amazing and disappointing speed. I used to be told those were my best days. I thought, if that were so, I had some rum ones to come on. I was no doubt thinking of the discipline, the tasks, the corrections, and the general perversity of my seniors and those in authority over me. But we must get on. School life itself is a big subject, and we must leave it.

How dear were the friendships of boyhood! Some last through life, others are broken by death, quarrels and removals.

The quarrels of boyhood were not usually serious. I wrestled with a lad once, and his arm was broken. I see him in Manchester sometimes, and his size makes me thankful he is not vindictive. Another lad I used to call upon at his home in the morning and pick him up on my way to school. I called as usual one morning and asked him if he was ready, and he replied, "Ah, tha's spoken first!" This remark reminded me that we had had a serious quarrel the night before, but I had forgotten it. How delightful it is to forget a wrong or a quarrel! You cannot do it by an effort. If it is not owing to a decay of memory, it must arise from a forgiving disposition. We were capable of that in our boyhood; now things will not fade away—we wish they would,—and the canvas of memory is blurred by many an ugly patch.

What would you not give to possess again the romping enthusiasm of your boyhood? The arrangements ever sent a thrill of delightful expectation through you for many days before the date fixed for the school cricket match. There were no leagues in those days, no restrain-

ing thought of averages—we thought only of three things, tradition, reputation and victory. In my first school match I went in first, and was not out at the close of the innings. I gave any amount of easy chances, but that did not appear to mitigate the rough handling that I got in being carried shoulder-high from the wickets by my schoolmates. I don't want any more of such distinctions.

How would you like to have again the appetite and digestive powers of your boyhood? You can't do with the apples, fruit and nuts, that you used to delight in. Don't you recollect an elderly lady once giving you a glass of milk and some preserve paste? Have you ever had anything nicer since? Now, when you get something nice, you daren't let yourself go. You were not always so. You ran great risks as a boy, and were prepared to run more. I remember four or five boys one summer morning going to dine at an eating-house in the Market-place. They brought us a meat-pie in a large dish. We finished the pie; it was delicious! On asking how much we had to pay, the woman said, "I'll only charge you 9d. It's been in the window three weeks!" Meat-pies must have deteriorated since then. What cook now can make a pie, which after three weeks' exposure in the window to the sun and innumerable flies, would be acceptable and so much enjoyed as the one I have mentioned?

As we get on in life we turn to the distant past. A kind Providence turns our gaze from the sadness and infirmities of age to the freshness and hopefulness of our boyhood. How every man is interested if you refer, however vaguely, to his boyhood; and how the very mention summons up vivid pictures of joy, tears and earnest living.

Boyhood is a most important—perhaps the most important—part of our life. We recall it with pleasure, and our mind constantly turns to it. Some event in family history brings it up—perhaps some family relic suggests it.

Boys fill a large place in the area of the human race. They are constantly doing something. We read of them, we hear of them, come in contact with them, and, I hope, love them. They are preparing to take our places, and, in their turn, to play their parts in the world's history. They remind us of our past, and I hope, in some respects at least, we present them a picture of what they would like to be.

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## "Letters from the Mountains."

A LITERARY BY-PATH.

BY JOHN MORTIMER.

**A**LWAYS get over a stile . . . that is to say, never omit to explore a footpath, for never was there a footpath yet which did not pass something of interest." This advice, which Richard Jefferies gives to the rambler in the country, is equally applicable to the explorer in the domain of literature. Of the pleasures to be derived by leaving its broad highways and taking to the by-paths, there may be recalled to the mind many writers who have given us plenteous examples, to which I would modestly venture to add an experience of my own. For this I am indebted to three small, calf-bound volumes entitled, "Letters from the Mountains; being the real correspondence of a lady between the years 1773 and 1807," and which made their appearance in the latter year. I do not count them among my own possessions, for, though the advice which Polonius gives to Laertes, that he should "neither a borrower nor a lender be," is equally good in relation to books as to money, to the offer of the loan of these I raised no objection. They formed part of the library of my old friend the late Dr. Alexander Thomson, from which source came also that book anent Thomas Platter, about which I have previously given some account. My friend was such an eminent scholar, and displayed such a fine taste in the selection of books, that his autograph on the fly-leaf of one has always, for me, the value of a literary endorsement. When I found, also, as in this case, that it was accompanied by a memorandum recording that the volumes were "picked up in Old Garratt

for two shillings," I concluded that he thought he had made a good bargain.

For the right ordering of my discourse I should premise that when the letters came into my hands I had no previous knowledge of their existence; so, in commencing to read them, there was an entire unconsciousness of where this literary by-path would lead me, and the narrative of the result, as here set forth, is merely an illustration of a pleasant process of evolution in the acquisition of knowledge. That they constituted the *real* correspondence of a lady, and were not such products of the imagination as we have been made familiar with in these latter days, in epistolary literature of the feminine kind, was, in the prospect, comforting. Thackeray tells us that he had what he calls bedside books, among which were "Howel's Letters," and a certain old-fashioned look about these led me to include them among books which are reserved for the closing evening hours, to be read by the bedroom fire, and in the mild illumination of candles.

For the most part the letters are addressed to ladies, and one is early made aware that the mountains are those of the Scottish Highlands, and that the fair correspondent is a young Scottish lady who is travelling with her parents from Glasgow—which she is pleased, in her romantic way, to call Balclutha—to Fort Augustus, which is to be their bidding place. From an abbreviated signature and some internal evidence, I inferred, and rightly, as the sequel showed, that her name was Anne MacVicar. It is in April of 1773 that the journey is begun, and her mood in setting out is, like the month, somewhat tearful. The outlook for her, it seems, is not a cheerful one. "Alas!" says she on the second page, "it is a bleak prospect for a poor traveller, scarce seventeen, to go she knows not where, and to do she knows not what, and to live with she knows not whom"; altogether there is much sorrow in her heart, very tenderly expressed, as she recalls the parting scenes with her friends. And here I may anticipate a little and

go on to say that as I turned the pages of these letters it was revealed to me that I was making the acquaintance of a young lady of marked individuality, one for whom William Black might have conceived a sympathetic regard, a damsel warm-hearted, quick-witted, sentimental in a sweetly wholesome way, keenly sensitive to the aspects of nature, and with ready powers of description, of an independent, reflective and critical mind withal, and with a knowledge of English literature not to be looked for in one so young, manifesting itself in incidental ways of quotation and reference, that came upon one in the nature of pleasant surprises. One finds, too, that she not only loves poetry but can herself write verse; that she is steeped in Ossian and Homer, and carries with her a copy of the *Odyssey*. Not a little did it contribute to the interest of these letters to find that the earliest were dated from Inverary and Oban, and that I was being conducted, in these stages of the journey, along mountain ways to some extent familiar in one's knapsack days. It is at Loch Lomond that this personal interest comes into play, and one reads how, as the road-travelling party approached it, there came on "a small, soft, melancholy rain, and Ben Lomond's great head was wrapt in such a veil of thick mist that the nearer we drew the less we saw of it." The young lady's mood is still as sad and tearful as the skies, and the mountain gloom is reflected within; she is very sure she will not smile this summer, "nor read any books but the Bible and Young's 'Night Thoughts,'" and even the *Odyssey* is to be rejected. And as to friends who are travelling with her, she says:—

They showed as much sense and feeling as Job's did, at first, whose silence on an occasion which common minds would have seized to say common things, I always admired. In short, the whole party seemed lost in meditation, till the sight of Loch Lomond roused us. What a happy faculty is an active imagination to counteract the evils of sickly sensibility! I pass over the beautiful groves and cornfields that



adorn the lower sides, for I had seen such things before, and they brought images of tranquility which my mind could not relish in its depressed state. But the solemn and melancholy grandeur of the lofty dark mountains, and abrupt rocks tufted with heather and juniper, that rose on the other side of the lake, and seemed to close its upper end, arrested my attention at once. I peopled their narrow and gloomy glens with those vindictive clans that used to make such fatal incursions of old. I thought I saw Bruce and his faithful few ascending them in his forced flight from Bute. A train of departed heroes seemed to pass in their clouds in long review, and do but guess who closed the procession, no other than the notorious Rob Roy, riding up the Loch side with the lady he forced away, and the 'twenty men in order,' who make such a figure in the ballad.

Her mother, she says, knew the family and could tell her the whole history of the transaction, and how the lady was too delicate for such a rough adventure, and how she died of grief very soon after.

But despite her sad mood, when she comes to the inn, our young lady, being by nature of a sprightly disposition, brightens up and confesses, to one she has left behind in sorrow, that though she had not expected to smile again, finding herself at dinner with pleasant company, she grew insensibly cheerful; "and before tea," says she, "your friend who was not to relax a muscle this year, more than half-smiled, and by supper-time laughed outright." "But," continues she, "truly might I say, 'in the midst of laughter the heart is sad.' Give me credit for honesty, imitate my sincerity, and tell me when *you* laughed first." Later, however, in the moonlit night, the Ossianic mania, as she calls it, takes possession of her, and the winds are in their gusts touching viewless harps, and to her eye "in the passing clouds, brightened by the beams of the moon, pass the shades of the lovely and the brave that live in the songs of other times." To add to the romance of the situation, as the moonstruck girl looks out from her window, from the kitchen below, and through the

disjointed floor, there rises, "like a stream of rich-distilled perfumes," some strains sad and sweet, both vocal and instrumental; and, stealing down there on tiptoe, she sees a great dark-browed highlander, sitting over a fire, playing a Gaelic lament on two jews' harps at once, "while a nymph, half hidden amongst her heavy locks, was pacing backwards, turning a great wheel and keeping time with voice and steps to his mournful tones." It is "Macgrigor na Ruara" that the highlander is playing; and years afterwards, when she comes to know Gaelic, she is able to translate the lament for inclusion in Thomson's "Scottish Music."

Journeying forward, they come to another inn, where there is a halt while one of the horses is shod; and our young lady takes the opportunity of wandering forth to gather some of the freshest primroses she has ever seen, found growing from the roots of a weeping birch, that actually "wept odorous dew" upon her. In her walk she comes to an inlet of the lake, with streams flowing into it, shaded with alder and hazel, and here she is reminded of a creek where Ulysses went on shore in Phœacia, and now she wishes for her Odyssey again, but, alas! it has been left behind in the chaise. At breakfast they are joined by a young student, travelling home from college, who, though otherwise polite and attractive, so amuses and irritates her by a querulousness and grumbling about food, unworthy of a highlander, that she likens him to Smelfungus in Sterne's "Sentimental Journey"; and this reminds her that they had that morning passed, "with reverence due," the monument of a real Smelfungus, as she is pleased, disrespectfully, to call Dr. Tobias Smollett, who, in "The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker," came this way to the renewal of the author's acquaintance with his native place and favourite lake.

Through the pass of Glencoe they travel, the new Smelfungus being of the party. The day is one of dismal rain, which adds, as she says, to the "horror of that

stupendous solitude"; but there is a little inn to arrive at, thatched as to its roof and disclosing in its interior "a well-swept clay floor and an enlivening blaze of peats and brushwood on the hearth," and implements for hunting and fishing suspended from the roof. Says our young lady: "I thought myself in Ithaca, though Homer does not speak of peats nor trout." Here are they very hospitably entertained. "Shall I tell you of our dinner?" she asks. "Never before did I blot paper with such a detail, but it is instructive to know how cheaply we may be pleased. On a clean table of two fir deals we had as clean a cloth; trout new from the lake, eggs fresh as our student's heart could wish, kippered salmon, fine new-made butter and barley cakes, which we preferred to the loaf we had brought with us. Smelfungus began to mutter about the cooking of our trouts; I pronounced them very well drest out of pure spite, for by this time I could not endure him from the pains he took to mortify the good people and to show how he had been used to lodge and dine better." There are two hours to wait for the ferry, and while Smelfungus is walking on the loch side, "in all the dignity of surly displeasure," she writes her letter. Then there is tea, with a venison ham, and other good things are forthcoming; and there is pleasant talk, too, so that everyone is pleased, and Smelfungus, she says, quoting Shakespeare a little incorrectly, himself becomes,

As mild and patient as the female dove,  
When first her golden couplets are disclos'd.

Through torrents of rain they travel across the loch and further on to Inverary, where they arrive "wet and weary, late and dreary," to find that "city of the mountains," as she calls it, veiled in mist, so that only through occasional moonbeams could she admire the semi-circular sweep which the beach makes around the lake. But next morning she is up at five to renew her correspondence, and tell how the sun shines again, and her heart is glad

at the sight of it; hope revives; "it is the spring of day, of life and of the year"; in the fair face of nature she finds endless sources of delight, consolation for sorrow, that, like Milton's sweet music,

will breathe

Above, about, and underneath.

Here, at Inverary, one gets descriptions of Loch Fyne, with the somewhat mean-looking village at the edge of it, the green sward, with noble beech trees on it, reaching from one horn of the crescent to the other, the castle of the Duke of Argyll, and behind it the great overshadowing mountain. The castle is visited, and she is much impressed with its Gothic grandeur, its noble interior, with the chamber hung with Gobelins' tapestry, where she seems to have entered some pastoral Arcadia, together with many other attractions; but she finds that it is not a place where she would care to live; "there is such a stately absence of all comfort, everything that unsophisticated nature delights to cling to is put so far away, and the owner seems somehow alone in the middle of his works, like Nebucadnezzar saying, 'Behold now the great Babylon which I have made.'" In contrast with this, it is delightful to her to see the moon shining on Loch Fyne, with the shadow of the mountain falling on the great house, in its solitary grandeur. In this letter there is an amusing touch of self-revelation on the part of the writer. She is telling of a friend who has married a widower, and become a step-mother, and of her she says: "She puts me in mind of a hen with an alien brood of young ducks. If I am ever to marry at all, which is very unlikely, thinking of many subjects as I do, I could be easily reconciled to a ready-made family, supposing them to be docile and grateful. I can easily comprehend how one could adopt them to one's affections." The plague of them as young animals would be avoided, and then "think of the credit one should get for being so kind to these ready-made innocents, and, moreover, the strong hold such generosity

would gain in your lord's affections. Now if there is any office that would insure one against paying Eve's penalty I think breeding ducks would be no bad speculation."

From Inverary there is a dreary ride on horseback over the rain-smitten moors of lofty Mona Lin, in storm and mist, and along a path where the horses are conducted with difficulty by the guide, with nothing but a flight of wild ducks from a small lake, and the uncertain sight of some deer in the mist, to relieve the monotony. Late at night Oban is reached, and the tired-out party is housed with a distant relative, one Collector MacVicar. This worthy old gentleman figures prominently in the earlier letters, and is so charming that our young lady falls deeply in love with him, but it is a hopeless business, as "he is about seventy and has been thrice married." The Collector's house overlooks the bay, and from it she can see some of the western islands and distant dark blue mountains, and thinks that just such a prospect "Ulysses had from the heights of his dear rocky Ithaca," looking on Zante and Cephalonia as she did on Mull and Tiree. There is a delightful green valley, too, reaching inland with cottages in it, and rocks tufted with yellow broom and mountain ash; and, rambling there, she comes upon goats, and is so attracted by them that she says: "I think if ever I run wild on the rocks, which at times I feel much inclined to, I will not be a shepherdess but a goatherder. These creatures have more sense and spirit than heavy-headed sheep; they differ much as highlanders do from plodding lowlanders." While they are in Oban she goes on a Sunday to an odd, old, half-ruinous church at Kilmore, some miles away, and the journey is made on horseback in falling snow, which the people mind no more than hair-powder. The minister is a handsome highlander, the brother, it appears, of the celebrated Flora Macdonald, whom he strongly resembles. She is deeply interested in the congregation, noting their garb and demeanour, and especially the grandmothers of some present. Of these

ancient dames she notes that "they preserve the form of dress worn some hundred years ago. Stately erect and self-satisfied, without a trace of the languor and coldness of age, they march up the area with gaily-coloured plaids fastened about the breast with a silver brooch, like the full moon in size and shape. Round their heads is tied the very plain kerchief Mrs. Page alludes to, when Falstaff tells her how well she would become a Venetian tire; and on each cheek depends a silver lock, which is always cherished, and considered, not improperly, as a kind of decoration. These, you must observe, are the common people." Then she tells how the young venerate the old, and the pious regard they have for their ancestors; altogether it is a fine country to grow old in, and to die in if you would have your memory cherished. That reference to the highland brooch reminds one that Wordsworth has devoted a poem to its history and associations:—

The silver brooch of massy frame,  
Worn at the breast of some grave dame  
On road or path, or at the door  
Of fern-thatched hut on heathy moor.

Our young lady is the only one in the congregation who has no Gaelic in which the sermon should have been delivered, but for her sake it is preached in English. She feels highly honoured, and says: "Judge of my importance in having a sermon preached for my very self. Poor souls! will you ever compare yourselves to me again." After service they adjourn to a kind of public-house for conversation and refreshment. The kirk itself, she says, is literally accounted a public place. "People not singularly pious, cross ferries and ride great distances in bad weather, not solely, I fear, to hear the glad tidings in church, but to meet friends in this good-humoured kindly way after service." There is a stormy ride homeward in blinding snow, and after that is reached she writes: "I am going to bid good night to the moon; the storm is over, the

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undulating waters are like living light, while the same beams repose so sweetly on the shadowy sides of far-seen mountains that arise in distant isles:—

in such a night  
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand  
Upon the wild sea bank, and waved her love  
To come again to Carthage.

Ungrateful cur that he was. Adieu! may you never wave a willow or spend a good day as I have done. It is past midnight, and remorse is preying on me."

So far I have dealt with very few of the letters. They are the spring-flowers, as it were, of a correspondence which extends over a long series of years, and the extracts I have made may have served as some light limnings of portraiture. My purpose will be achieved when I come to the point of discovery of their authorship, which lies within these earlier limitations. To this end the narrative of the journey may be continued, as succinctly as the conditions will permit until the writer reaches Fort Augustus. In the last letter from Oban there is a little bit of self-revelation worth noting. She says: "Do not think that I indulge myself in the conceit of not caring for anybody unless they have the taste for reading, which great leisure and solitude, in a manner, forced upon me. But I would have people love truth and nature; I would have them look a little into the great work which their Maker has left open to everybody. I would have the rising and setting sun, the blossoming trees and opening flowers give them the same pleasure, which many taste without knowing their alphabet."

From Oban they sail in the King's wherry, and have a stormy voyage, and, being in danger of foundering, are compelled to take refuge in Appin, where for a time they land. Of her experiences on shore one finds that, having visited a beautiful garden where a delightful old lady cultivates medical herbs, and, having taken a stroll

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through a moonlit wood, this girl of many moods has changed her mind about herding goats, and is determined to seek forthwith :

A hairy gown and narrow cell  
Where I may sit and nightly spell,  
Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
And every herb that sips the dew.

"What fine transitions," says she, "one might make, from the bright eye of the celestial bull to the soft eye of the terrestrial daisy, by thus studying stars and herbs together. A pair of hermits, were that possible, would be a double felicity." With Fort William, where they halt for a time, she is sorely disappointed, and as for Ben Nevis, "it is a great clumsy mountain, without any fanciful breaks or fine marked outline, like those of Morven. It is great without sublimity, and seems to nod above the ugly town, and shake a perpetual drizzle from its misty locks. As far as a mountain can resemble a man, it resembles the person Smollett has marked out by the name of Captain Gawky. I wonder much how anyone lives here, when they could live anywhere else." As for the Fort, "it looks just like a place to kill people in, 'tis so gloomy and uncouth." "O," she exclaims, "this is a bad country for a butterfly, a bee, or an enthusiast to expatriate in, but it is the best place in the world to remember an absent friend in!" Of the further road-travelling on horseback to Fort Augustus I must say little. The narrative is full of romantic charm, with picturesque descriptions of the lochs and rivers that lie between, which, she says, prophetically, may some day be linked together by a canal forming a navigable way between the eastern and the western seas. Interwoven with her impressions of the wildness of the scenery the gloom of mountain and of glen, relieved by features of a softer kind, she gives one stories of the old highland chieftains and their clans, and of the massacre of Glencoe. She is surprised to find the raiding spirit is not yet extinct,



and that a sweet-looking hamlet, a pastoral solitude in a little green plain, is the abode of the only remaining horde of cattle-stealers, and that the cluster of innocent peasant cottages is merely a den of thieves. Hitherto she has been disposed to regard the military road as an innovation, but now, in view of its civilising effects, she becomes a convert, and finds herself in sympathy with that good-natured Irishman, Governor Caulfield, of Fort George, who said :

Had you seen these roads before they were made  
You would hold up your hands and bless General Wade.

As we have seen, her moods vary with her surroundings, and when there is storm and gloom we find her in a melancholy hour expressing herself in verse; the following are the concluding lines of her poem :—

Thus pleased, the sea fowl cry aloud,  
While toss'd aloft from cloud to cloud,  
With heedless course they roam ;  
With stern delight unmix'd with care,  
They wander thro' the troubled air,  
Like me, without a home.

Of course, as she admits, there is a poetic fallacy here, seeing that both the wild-fowl and herself will in due time reach home.

When at last she arrives at Fort Augustus it is to find herself travel-worn, sick and sad, and sheltered, for the time being, " in the worst inn's worst room," but when she gets comfortably housed along with her parents, her father having come to be barrack-master at the Fort, she gives one descriptions of the place, of Loch Ness, upon which it stands, and of the garrison life. But of the greatest interest are some letters addressed to her relative Collector MacVicar of Oban. For his entertainment she ventures upon some essays in biographical criticism, and among them are estimates of the character of Peter the Great and Oliver Cromwell. In one of these she says that her study

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of Cromwell has been interrupted by a book which has completely absorbed her attention for the time. She writes:—

'Tis the "Vicar of Wakefield," which you must certainly read. Goldsmith puts one in mind of Shakespeare; his narrative is improbable and absurd in many instances, yet all his characters do and say so exactly what might be supposed of them, if so circumstanced, that you willingly resign your mind to the sway of this pleasing enchanter: laugh heartily at improbable incidents and weep bitterly for impossible distresses. But his personages have all so much nature about them. Keep your gravity, if you can, when Moses is going to market with the colt, in his waistcoat of gosling green; when the Vicar's family make the notable procession on Blackberry and his companion; or when the fine ladies dazzle the Flamboroughs with taste, Shakespeare and the musical glasses; not to mention the polemical triumphs of that redoubted monogamist the Vicar. 'Tis a thousand pities Goldsmith had not patience or art to conclude suitably a story so happily conducted; but the closing events rush on so precipitately, are managed with so little skill, and wound up in such a hurried and really bungling manner, that you seem hastily awakened from an affecting dream. Then miseries are heaped on the poor Vicar with such barbarous profusion that the imagination, weary of such cruel tyranny, ends it by breaking the illusion. I have too much, indeed, anticipated your own observations; but my intention was to awake your curiosity that you might share the pleasure this artless tale has afforded me.

These criticisms seem to have surprised the worthy old gentleman, and he is curious to know from what sources this "premature information and reflection" has been obtained. Hitherto one has known nothing of her antecedents, though here and there in her letters there were incidental remarks which pointed to some former residence in North America. In one place she says: "I now think plaids and faltans (fillets) just as becoming as I once did the furs and wampums of the Mohawks, whom I always remember with kindness"; and now she tells the Collector

at some length how when, in her earliest years, she lived among the Dutch settlers in Albany, her father being an officer in the army, and quartered there, she came to know Madam, or, as she calls her, Aunt Schuyler, who took a great fancy to her, who wished to adopt her, and in whose house she lived for a while; how this good lady, whose life she would one day like to write, finding her reading "Paradise Lost" with delighted attention, was astonished to see a child take pleasure in such a book, and being herself a studious reader, encouraged this taste to the introduction of her to such literature as was available; to the "Spectator," the tragedy of "Cato," the works of Milton and Young, together with a good deal of biography and history; and in this way, as she says, "whatever culture my mind has received I owe to her."

Anent that letter containing the criticism of Goldsmith, it is worthy of note that about three months after it was written, and on the evening of an August day, two horsemen might have been seen riding along the margin of Lough Ness. They were no other than those two friends of Goldsmith, Dr. Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, who were on their way from Inverness to Fort Augustus, where they arrived after dark, and were admitted at the postern, the gate being closed. As the inn was too wretched for gentlemen of their quality, they were very hospitably entertained by the Governor; and of their doings here one may read in their respective journals of their journey to the Hebrides. Our young lady makes no mention of this visit, though she must have been aware of it. She makes reference, however, on one occasion to "the surly Doctor" as having been entertained by someone she knew; and elsewhere says to a friend, "I would not have you rely on Johnson's account of anything relating to the Highlands," and "Boswell, vain, fantastic and credulous, often misled him without intending it." On their way Johnson and Boswell had visited the falls of Fyers, which Johnson describes, wishing, however, that

his curiosity might have been gratified with less trouble and danger. He also mentions the existence, on the Loch, of a sloop of sixty tons, which was used in the service of the fort, and thereby hangs a tale. In one of her letters, our correspondent tells of a pleasure party on the Loch to see the famous fall, and how in this sloop, with a firing of her guns, and a hoisting of colours, they leave the fort and sail gaily forth. It is a June day, and she describes the voyage out, the fall, and the surrounding scenery with a very graphic pen, and to the indulgence of much sentiment of a romantic kind. All goes merrily until it is time to return, and the spirits of the party begin to flag. "One lady," she says, "always delicate and nervous, was seized with a fit, a hysterical one, that frightened us all. I cut her laces, suppressed her struggles, and supported her in my arms during the paroxysms, which lasted near two hours. What you must allow to be very generous in the company, not one of them seemed to envy my place, or made the smallest effort to supplant me in it." To add to the discomfort a dead calm comes on, four miles from home. It is now midnight, and among the party there is only gloomy discomfort and drowsy insipidity. "Our chief," she says, "took a fit of the fidgets, and began to cry, 'Poh, Poh'; his lady took a fit of yawning; his little grandson took a fit of crying, which made his daughter take a fit of anger; the Doctor took a fit of snoring; even the good-natured Admiral took a fit of fretting because the sailors had taken a fit of drinking." She walks the deck and tries to find consolation in poetry and meditation upon the beauty of the moonlit lake, but it is of no use. At two in the morning a boat is got out, and the gentlemen row them home, leaving the galley to the drunken sailors. "You may judge," says she, "how gaily we arrived. I fancy Solomon had just returned from a long party of pleasure on the sea of Tiberias, where one of his mistresses

had the hysterics, when he drew his pensive conclusion that 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' "

I had not read much further in these letters before I came upon one signed "Anne Grant," and dated from Laggan. Our young lady had changed her name; in fact, had married the chaplain to the garrison, who was also the clergyman at Laggan, a highland parish not far away. Here a light broke in upon me; I took down a volume of Scottish songs, and there found one by Mrs. Grant, of Laggan, which commences thus:—

Oh where, tell me where has your highland laddie gone?  
Oh where, tell me where has your highland laddie gone?  
He's gone with streaming banners where noble deeds are done,  
And my sad heart will tremble till he comes safely home.

I had got the clue, and the priceless "Dictionary of National Biography" easily furnished the rest. From that and other sources did one come to know that she was born at Glasgow in 1755, on the 21st February, and that her father was Duncan MacVicar, a true highlander, and "a plain, brave, pious man," and, further, of his military service in North America, of the esteem in which he was held by the Dutch settlers in Albany, of his acquiring a grant of land on the Hudson, and retiring on half-pay to become a farmer there, of his return to Glasgow, with other details leading up to that journey to Fort Augustus, where he became barrack-master. Thirteen years, it seems, did his daughter reside in North America, becoming, as we have seen, familiar with those Indians of the Mohawk tribe, the Dutch settlers, and good "Aunt Schuyler," of whom she subsequently wrote some affectionate "memorials." Of her life at Laggan the best impression is to be got from her letters, which are throughout full of interest. There she learned Gaelic, studied folk-lore, and was very kind to the poor, conducting her correspondence and her literary studies under great difficulties, for she had the entire management of a farm.

In 1801 her husband died, leaving her with eight children, and thereafter there was much of struggle and trial in store for her, all these children save one dying before her, for she reached the ripe age of eighty-three years. Meanwhile she wrote much, including a volume of poems and some "Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland." When she came to reside in Edinburgh she was recognised as a distinct personage in literary circles and an authority in matters relating to the Highlands. It is interesting to know that these "Letters from the Mountains" were published "to enable her to provide an outfit for her eldest son, who had obtained a commission in the East India Company's service," and that the success of the venture was immediate. Jeffrey—for whom she had a great regard, though, being herself an ardent disciple of Wordsworth, she did not approve of his attitude towards that poet—reviewed her in the "Edinburgh," and was induced, by the letters, to make a pilgrimage to Laggan. Scott knew her well, and refers to her as the good Mrs. Grant, though he was rather shy of her, in view of her tongue and her pen, which he thought somewhat overpowering; moreover, he was annoyed by a report emanating from America, that he had confessed to her that he was the author of the Waverley Novels; but he admitted that she was an excellent person notwithstanding. One finds, too, that De Quincey came to know her, and says: "Her kindness was particularly flattering, and to this day I retain the impression of the benignity which she, an established wit, and just then receiving incense from all quarters, showed in her manner to me, a person wholly unknown." To these conclusions and into this distinguished company has my literary by-path led me, and though, perchance, they might have been arrived at by some other and directer way I cannot believe that it could have been by one that would have proved half as pleasant.

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## Dr. Johnson as a Letter-Writer.

BY J. J. RICHARDSON.

WE often hear it said that the age of letter writing, like that of chivalry, is gone; and it is more than probable that this is true. With our facilities for travelling from place to place, our penny post, our telegraphs and telephones, to say nothing of the promptness and ubiquity of the daily newspaper, there is an absence of stimulus, and, let it be candidly admitted, no real need, to write the long letters that our forefathers delighted in. Therefore it is not likely that the twentieth century will leave behind it, for the amusement and instruction of posterity, any such legacy of intimate and revealing letters as we have inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Posterity has done so little for us that it would be needless waste of sympathy to worry at its possible loss. What is of much more concern to ourselves is that we should enjoy the feast of epistolary good things which the great writers of the past have spread before us. And among the viands on this well-furnished board the letters of Samuel Johnson have an honoured place. Not, admittedly, with the choicest of such dishes, for we cannot rank Johnson as a letter writer with Swift, Horace Walpole, Cowper, Byron, Charles Lamb and R. L. Stevenson.

One letter at least of his has become a classic, and in its vein, perhaps, has no rival—that written, when his Dictionary was on the “verge of publication,” to the Earl of Chesterfield. In this there is a dignity of style truly Johnsonian, yet an absence of that ponderous phrasing

which we associate with his name. There is the keenest satire expressed with the severest restraint. There is no attempt to use his favourite weapon—an oaken cudgel. He has put that aside, and, as befits an occasion when he is attacking a nobleman, not merely a publisher, has armed himself with the flashing rapier of irony. But each thrust of the blade is incisive, and his Lordship must surely have winced more than once at the skill of “the retired and un-courtly scholar,” as Johnson termed himself. What could be more admirably expressed than this? “Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind, but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it, till I am known and do not want it.”

The greatness of Johnson's equipment as a man of letters is undeniable, but he did not possess the brilliant wit, the gay or sardonic humour, the light and genial touch, or the easy familiarity of manner which converses, as it were, pen in hand, in a vivacious and allusive style with an intimate friend. And it is in these qualities that much of the charm lies which makes our best letter writers such delightful companions when we wish to relax our minds, and indulge in literary enjoyment. But there is in his letters, as in all good letters, however much they may differ in style, or vary in interest, a revelation of personality—a portrayal, maybe partly unconscious and unintentional, of the writer's true self.

Johnson himself once wrote that “In a man's letters his soul is naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process, nothing is invented, nothing distorted, you see systems in their elements, you discover actions in their motives.”

It would be unwise to accept this literally. It expresses



the mood of Johnson's mind at the time he was writing, not the settled conviction of so sensible a thinker. He knew well enough that in letter writing, as in all the other arts of life, no one ever escapes entirely, and some make little or no attempt to escape, from posing. He was nearer the truth when he said, in his "Life of Pope," that "there is no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy, and sophistication than epistolary intercourse." But among the letter writers of our literature it may be safely asserted that Johnson was one of the most natural—one of those least given to placing himself or his subject in an egotistic light. There can be no doubt that in reading his letters we get very near to the real Johnson; the sympathetic, kindly, charitable man, ever ready to help with counsel and aid; the man who, when he found the poor bedraggled creature in the streets, carried her to his lodgings and sought to restore her to health and a life of virtue; the man who usually had his pocket full of small coins so that he could give to beggars, and who allowed his home to be monopolised by a lot of grumbling, discontented people who were dependent on his bounty. But not the man, who, in the warmth of debate, so frequently vented his anger and spleen upon an opponent, or who, when Mrs. Thrale was telling him of an acquaintance of hers who would be grieved because her friend had missed the chance of securing a fortune, replied, somewhat brutally, "She will suffer as much, perhaps, as your horse did when your cow mis-carried"; or of whom Goldsmith once said, "There is no arguing with Johnson, for if his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt end of it."

The Johnson we grow acquainted with in these letters can no longer be counted a young man. The great majority of the letters preserved to us were written after he had passed middle life; and that they lack the buoyancy, hopefulness, and enthusiasm that should, and usually does, characterise youth need be no matter of surprise to

us. Johnson's keen struggle to gain a footing in the world, the hardships he endured, and his lack of friends are sufficient to account for the fewness of his early letters. It is after he has practically finished his life's work, and with his pension is in possession of means enough for his modest wants, as well as acknowledged as the greatest literary figure of his day, that his letters become numerous.

The older he grew the more letters he wrote. With those in Boswell's *Life*, and in the two volumes so finely edited, and so copiously annotated by Dr. Birkbeck Hill we have over a thousand letters. They range from short notes requesting a favour of a friend, or for a needy acquaintance, or the loan of some book to help him in his literary work, to long familiar epistles to Mrs. Thrale, one of which, written whilst on his tour in the Hebrides, runs to about four thousand words. Nearly one-third of these letters, and undoubtedly the most interesting of the series, was written to Mrs. Thrale. His intimacy with, and his interest in, her and her family make him unbend from his customary formal manner, and give to the correspondence that familiarity without which all letter writing is as mere brass and tinkling cymbals. Dr. Birkbeck Hill says of these letters that, "In writing to her, Johnson touched on a much greater variety of persons and subjects. He frequently introduced quotations and literary allusions. She was a lady of some learning and many pretensions, who had more wit and more literature than even the great Mrs. Montague."

Considering that Mrs. Montague was a leader of society who sought to make her house in Mayfair the central point of union for all the intellect and fashion of the Metropolis, a lady of whom Johnson himself could say that, "She diffuses more knowledge than any woman I know, or indeed almost any man," and to whose assemblies we owe the origin of the epithet "blue stocking," the praise is by no means small.

This close friendship with Mrs. Thrale lasted for many years, and was undeniably a source of keen pleasure to Johnson in the later years of his life. No one can read what he has written to her without the feeling that he thoroughly enjoyed doing so.

And on her part, as a lady of literary tastes, and a fervent admirer of the great Doctor, it could not have been other than flattering, even to a vain woman, to be told by him that, "Life has, upon the whole, fallen short, very short, of my early expectations, but the acquisition of such a friendship, at an age when new friendships are seldom acquired, is something better than the general course of things gives a man a right to expect. I think on it with great delight. I am not very apt to be delighted." Or as he puts it on another occasion, when writing to her, "These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which minds naturally in unison move each other as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched as I am touched. I have concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart."

Of his delight in this intimacy the correspondence bears continuous testimony. When he was away from London, or she was out of town, he wrote very frequently, giving minute particulars of his movements, his mode of life, his ailments, and his friends, and continually encouraged her to reply. He longed to know all that was going on in her household, and complained when she was remiss in writing. "Such tattle as filled your last sweet letter prevents one great inconvenience of absence, that of returning home a stranger and an inquirer. The variations of life consist of little things. . . . We look at each other in silence only for want of petty talk upon slight occurrences. Continue therefore to write all that you would say."

This last sentence contains counsel which all who have

to write letters to friends might well lay to heart. For, surely, the nearer a letter approaches to what one would say in conversation the more interesting it must be. Not that Johnson always wrote in this way, or if he did some of his talk must have been somewhat tedious to listen to, for we find him writing to Mrs. Thrale that "Incommunicative taciturnity neither imparts nor invites friendship, but reposes on a stubborn sufficiency, self-centred, and neglects the interchange of that social officiousness by which we are habitually endeared to one another. They that mean to make no use of friends will be at little trouble to gain them, and to be without friendship is to be without one of the first comforts of our present state."

The craving for friendship which is so pronounced a trait in Dr. Johnson's character, was possibly accentuated by his natural melancholy, his fear of death, and his predisposition to look upon the gloomy side of things. Late in life he remarked, "I look upon a day as lost, in which I do not make a new acquaintance." And there can be no doubt that "by the frequency of his letters he strove to keep himself alive in the memory and affections of his friends."

There are times in this correspondence with Mrs. Thrale when he feels that although he has nothing to tell her he must yet write, and keep up the habit of communicativeness. Then we get this letter:—

You talk of writing, and writing, as if you had all the writing to yourself. If our correspondence were printed I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the author's favourite, would say that I am a good writer too. To sit down so often with nothing to say, to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without remembrance of having said, is a power which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that everybody has it. Some when they write to their friends are all affection, some are wise and sententious, some strain their powers for efforts of gaiety, some write news, and some write secrets, but to make

a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret is doubtless the great epistolic art.

Among others of the fair sex with whom Dr. Johnson corresponded was Fanny Burney, but she refused to allow his letters to her to be published, though Boswell, with his accustomed pertinacity, besought her to let him have some of them. "Yes, madam," he said, "you must give me some of your choice little notes of the Doctor's; we have seen him long enough on stilts, I want to show him in a new light. Grave Sam, and great Sam, and solemn Sam, and learned Sam,—all these he has appeared over and over. Now I want to entwine a wreath of the graces across his brow. I want to show him as gay Sam, agreeable Sam, pleasant Sam, so you must help me with some of his beautiful billets to yourself."

But his pleading was of no avail, and so we miss the gay, the agreeable, the pleasant Sam, and must be content with the great Doctor in his graver humours. Among the subjects touched upon in these letters the not very cheerful one of his bodily ailments is, perhaps, most frequently referred to. Whilst interested in his own he was none the less solicitous about the complaints of others, and ever ready to give them advice. He had a leaning towards medical studies, and something of the enthusiasm of an amateur. At times his advice sounds very curious to us, as, for instance, where he writes his friend the Rev. Dr. Taylor: "I hope you persevere in drinking. My opinion is that I have drunk too little, and therefore have the gout, for it is my own acquisition, as neither my father had it nor my mother." One cannot but think here of the huge quantities of tea he used to consume. Again, to Mrs. Porter, who had been suffering from gout, he writes: "In the meantime take great care of your health, and drink as much as possible."

Many of his letters to Mrs. Thrale describe his complaints, and the remedies he is trying, in such detail that

we may think them wanting in good taste. Mrs. Thrale, however, had nursed him through an illness, and it was of her house that he said it was the only one where he could use "all the freedom that sickness requires," so that his lack of reticence is not so surprising as at first appears. Even nowadays we are told that people in society are never so happy as when discussing their ailments. Appendicitis is a more fashionable topic of conversation than art, and liver troubles than literature. Whilst of those who are not in society, but dearly wish they were, a great many spend their most delightful holidays in hydropathic establishments. It must not be forgotten that there is something so very personal about one's ailments, and, after all, the personal element in life is the most interesting. Considerably more attention is aroused by a question of privilege in Parliament, or a scene on the floor of the House of Commons, than by the third reading of even a useful Measure of Reform; the rivalry of two alleged discoverers of the North Pole far surpasses in popularity the scientific results of the most successful voyage of exploration; whilst the "Reminiscences" of an octogenarian Countess threaten to attain a vogue as great as the novels of Miss Marie Corelli or Mr. Hall Caine. Not only the proper study of mankind, but the most fascinating is man, and even more so woman.

It is largely because a man's letters reveal so much of his character and personality that they are so interesting, even though we may never have known him and the events of which he writes are buried beneath the dust of centuries. In the case of Dr. Johnson his letters show the better and, I think, the truer side of his character. His roughness, his peculiarities, his mannerisms and his prejudices do not obtrude themselves in his correspondence, and thus we see more of him as the warm-hearted friend, the sage counsellor, the wise moralist and the sad, but never despairing philosopher. In the stricter meaning of the word Johnson may not be a philosopher. He was too

practical a man to be that. But in the looser acceptation of the term it would not be incorrect to call him one. His old fellow student Edwards, whom he met again after losing sight of him for fifty years, said: "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried, too, in my time to be a philosopher, but I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in."

Johnson had thought much upon life, and had keenly experienced its vicissitudes, but he felt that it was worth living. Plagued by illness, overshadowed by constitutional melancholy, a frequent prey to gloomy thoughts, he still loved it. With him action was our being's end and aim, and his counsel was to act well our part. Whether looked upon as an ordeal, or a game, life should be encountered bravely, and with no supineness of spirit. What is worth doing is worth doing well. "If the world be worth winning," he wrote, "let us enjoy it, and if it is to be despised let us despise it by conviction. But the world is not to be despised, but as it is compared with something better. Company is in itself better than solitude, and pleasure better than indolence . . . *Hoc age*, is the great rule, whether you are serious or merry."

At a time of life when he had passed the allotted span of a man's years, at an age which only few men reach, and of those the majority seem content with mere existence, he writes, in apparent forgetfulness of his Dictionary and his other multifarious labours: "I have led an inactive and careless life. It is time at last to be diligent. There is yet provision to be made for eternity." To Johnson the approach of death was full of terrors. His disquietude on this account is seen many times in his letters. Boswell once asked him, "Is not the fear of death natural to man?" "So much so, sir," was his reply, "that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it."

Surely his was not an ill-spent life! What had he to fear? He did his work amid much depression of spirit,

and physical discomfort, but he never rebelled, and he never complained. "A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine," was his opinion. And what more modest estimate of his career could be made than his own: "I have through my whole progress of authorship honestly endeavoured to teach the right, though I have not been sufficiently diligent to practice it, and have offered mankind my opinion as a rule, but never professed my behaviour as an example."

Yet, what finer example is there in our literature?

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## Oliver Wendell Holmes: an Episode and an Estimate.

BY ARTHUR W. FOX.

I N June, 1884, during my college course in Cambridge the day for conferring Honorary Degrees upon men of distinction came round in its turn. When they learned that the famous "Autocrat" was to be honoured the undergraduates were in a fervour of excitement. His works had been read, re-read and admired by countless students, and all were most eager to see the noted American. It was a matter of some difficulty to get tickets for the Senate-house; but I contrived to secure one by deluding my tutor into the ungrounded belief that I was one of the quieter kind, who could not possibly be guilty of unseemly noise. The galleries were crowded with undergraduates bubbling over with wit or with the best substitute for wit which they could provide. A Greek Bishop of stately proportions and the dapper little Oliver Wendell Holmes were the only two to be admitted to the degree of LL.D. The Vice-Chancellor sat upon his throne; Dr. Sandys, the Public Orator, was there, whose business it was to present the recipients of Honorary Degrees in chosen sentences of polished Latin. Various exercises had first to be undergone, such as the recitation of the Greek and Latin Odes and of the prize poem on "Vasco de Gama," written by Dr. Moulton. When the occupants of the galleries caught sight of the two who were awaiting presentation, with that pleasing familiarity towards university authorities shown by them when it can be used with safety, they shouted, pointing to the Greek

Bishop, who took their noise for appreciation, "Sandys, what's that long Johnnie's name?" The Public Orator strove to look dignified, but in vain; while it is perhaps needless to add that the "Autocrat" was immensely amused with the proceedings.

The Greek Ode was recited to the accompaniment of various musical instruments quite unknown to the ancient Greek, and of stern criticism, which fell with indifferent grace from the lips of those who heard nothing of it. Of the Latin Ode only the word "Nusquam" or "Nowhere" was audible; whereupon three cheers for "Nusquam" were called for and given with the utmost heartiness. Dr. Moulton was received with enthusiasm. He recited his poem, which was amongst the best in its kind, in a tremulous voice and with the aid of a prompter. Only one comment was made during his recitation: he was unhappy enough to have inserted the not unfamiliar words, "The scene was changed." Instantly a small voice, in a tone affecting the deepest admiration, was heard to remark, "Oh, Moulton, how original!" In due course Dr. Sandys advanced to the front and made one of those exquisite Latin orations for which he was always noted. His audience in the galleries did not listen with becoming reverence; some even ventured to criticise his Latinity, and there were symptoms of great impatience while the Greek Bishop was being presented. At length the Public Orator began, "Et tu qui trans aequor Atlanticum." The last word in its Latin dress was recognisable even by Stinksmen, and a lusty cheer made the rafters ring. There were vociferous calls for a speech; but that was not permissible, and the "Autocrat" received his degree and went to lunch in august company. The impression of his outer man left upon my mind is very vivid. He was rather below the middle height, and his face was far more youthful than it is shown to be in any of his portraits. He was like a grey-headed boy with a humorous twinkle in his eye and a kindly smile upon his lips. Short as he was,

he looked very dignified in his scarlet Doctor's gown with its pink hood. But in company he was delightful; he seemed intuitively to penetrate into the mind of those with whom he conversed and to be able to say just the right thing to each of them. He had a slight hesitation of speech, which only added to the keenness of his kindly wit and his genial repartees. The sunlight, which had browned his face, was in his heart and shone from his eyes. To have seen the man gave a new interest to his writings, which is by no means always the case; for the author seemed suited to his books, and his books to their author.

It is easier to underestimate Oliver Wendell Holmes than to rate him at his true worth. A keen lover of eighteenth century literature, he reproduced in his style something of the flavour of that much, and needlessly abused epoch in our literature. The light tone of his three most famous works—the "Breakfast Table" series—has led critics to miss occasional thoughts of unusual depth, especially on scientific subjects, in which Holmes was an expert. The "young man John," with his practical application of abstract truths to concrete instances, the "schoolmistress," the gentle "Iris," "Little Boston," that incarnation of the spirit of the New England city and a host of other figures arise from the "Breakfast Table" invested with the reality of life. The wit is keen yet kindly, the humour is sunny, the thought sparkles with epigram and upon occasion sounds the depths of being, while the snatches of merry verse and real poetry are most attractive. "The wonderful one-hoss shay," the beautiful tribute to the "Gray-haired Boys" (his old college friends with whom he dined once a year), his "Hymn to Wine," as altered by the Temperance Society, and his "Lines by His Latin Tutor" lend a charm of their own to his wise and witty essays. His two novels, "Elsie Venner" and "A Mortal Antipathy," though seldom read to-day, have a scientific interest of their own.

Each was written to support a thesis, which is worked out in the story. The first is not pleasant, but it has a certain power about it which redeems something of the disagreeable flavour.

Oliver Wendell Holmes had the faculty of writing musical verse, which he often used for ceremonial occasions. He was a true poet of a somewhat fastidious type. He was in no way a democrat, and he was a Nonconformist to the backbone. He was in temper a New England aristocrat endowed with a kindly disposition which won him many firm friends. Longfellow, Emerson, Hawthorne and many others of America's most gifted sons were among his intimates. To them he read his humorous poems, and he was cheered by their affection and their approval. Of these verses it must be said that their rhythm is musical, while the steady light of humour and the flashing of nimble wit in them are singularly refreshing. When the "music-grinders" had ground all their music the fact is mentioned that "a hat was going round," whereupon the poet gives a piece of sound advice on this

But if you are a portly man,  
Put on your fiercest frown,  
And talk about a constable  
To turn them out of town;  
Then close your sentence in a rage  
And shut the window down.

And if you are a slender man,  
Not big enough for that,  
Or if you cannot make a speech,  
Because you are a flat,  
Go very quietly and drop  
A button in the hat.

Surely a happier ending could scarcely have been contrived to the ear-tormenting discords of the wandering "sons of melody." In like manner in "The Height of the Ridiculous" and the "Comet" the same keen wit is to be

found. In the latter poem he imagines the world to be set on fire by its subject, and pleasantly remarks :

I saw a roasting pullet sit  
Upon a baking egg.

His humorous verse is almost always delicately conceived, daintily executed and marked by subtle strokes of wit.

As a poet of a more serious type he is by no means equally successful. But he certainly had the chiming of a musical rhythm in his soul, which guarded him against harsh and hypermetrical lines. For the most part his writing in this kind seldom soars above the commonplace. But now and then he reached an unwonted height, as in "The Last Leaf" and "The Chambered Nautilus," which stands alone amongst his works for haunting melody, fine suggestiveness and the power of its description of the dead shell. It runs :

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails the unshadowed main,—  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purple wings  
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
And every chambered cell,  
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
Before thee lies revealed,—  
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread its lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in its last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap, forlorn!  
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!  
While on mine ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

This true and beautiful poem brings me to my final words on Oliver Wendell Holmes. Though perhaps something of an egotist, his life was lived in a lowly piety, which was not in any way morbid. He fills a place of his own in literature, which has been occupied by no one before or after him. There is no question of major or minor in my estimate of the genial "Autocrat." It is enough for me to say that he has given me many hours of unalloyed pleasure, and upon occasion he has lifted me above the turmoil of life into a purer and sweeter air.

\* \* \*

## "When Molly Takes an Airing."

BY TINSLEY PRATT.

WHEN Molly takes an airing  
The rude winds cease to blow;  
The sky is full of sunshine;  
The streams with music flow;  
The throstle in the hornbeam  
Lifts up his song of praise—  
When Molly takes an airing  
And wanders down the ways.

She lacks both wealth and station;  
She's neither house nor lands;  
She has no priceless jewels  
To deck her maiden hands:  
But you should see the laughter  
That sparkles in her eyes,  
And oh! her artless words outshine  
The wisdom of the wise.

Let lords roll in their coaches;  
Proud madams dress so fine;  
A fig for all their trumpery,  
They lack the wealth that's mine!  
My lady wears no jewels,  
Nor yet a satin gown;  
She'd think it shame to be, I know,  
The talk of half the town.

Her beauty none may question;  
Her colour is—her own;  
And all around her seems to float  
The scent from roses blown.  
She's queen of all the graces;  
Her step is light and free,  
And Molly, with her laughing eyes,  
Reigns o'er the world—and me!

She loves to walk at sundown  
 Through meadows sweet with hay,  
 When over all the hedgerows  
 The woodbine clusters stray :—  
 She loves to walk at sundown  
 And breathe the summer air,  
 Then all her speech is golden,  
 And all her looks are fair.

Then as I walk beside her  
 I'm lost—in fairyland,  
 And wondrous melodies I hear  
 Float by on every hand;  
 I think her name is whispered  
 By every passing breeze,  
 And "Molly!"—"Molly!"—ripples through  
 Each avenue of trees.

Now, some time in the future,  
 We're going to settle down—  
 As faithful lovers ought to do—  
 Far from the noisy town;  
 We shan't have teeming riches,  
 But we shall try instead  
 To live the old life o'er again  
 "On love and cottage-bread."

And, maybe, we shall have sometimes  
 A little tiff or so;  
 But Gloom shall ne'er keep house with us,  
 We'll bid the spectre—"go!"  
 And, through the summer weather,  
 We'll dream of other days—  
 When Molly took an airing  
 And wandered down the ways.

\* \* \*



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